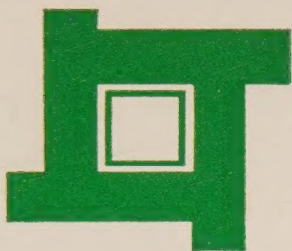


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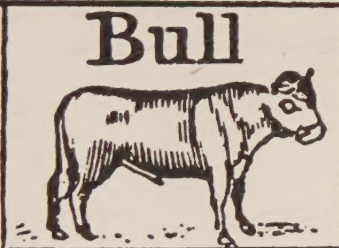
STAND

A quarterly Review of Literature and the Arts



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1



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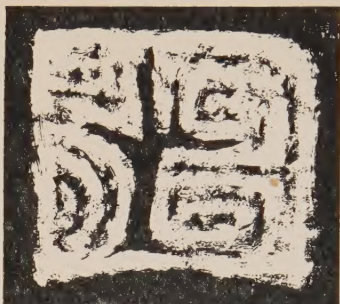
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Four Poems

DIEPPE

1

again the last ebb
the dead shingle
the turning then the steps
towards the lighted town

1937

2

my way is in the sand flowing
between the shingle and the dune
the summer rain rains on my life
on me my life harrying fleeing
to its beginning to its end

my peace is there in the receding mist
when I may cease from treading these long shifting thresholds
and live the space of a door
that opens and shuts

1941

3

what would I do without this world faceless incurious
where to be lasts but an instant where every instant
spills in the void the ignorance of having been
without this wave where in the end
body and shadow together are engulfed
what would I do without this silence where the murmurs die
the pantings the frenzies towards succour towards love
without this sky that soars
above its ballast dust

what would I do what I did yesterday and the day before
peering out of my deadlight looking for another
wandering like me eddying far from all the living
in a convulsive space
among the voices voiceless
that throng my hiddenness

1941

4

I would like my love to die
and the rain to be falling on the graveyard
and on me walking the streets
mourning the first and last to love me

1941

(translated from the French by the author)

encore le dernier reflux
le galet mort
le demi-tour puis les pas
vers les vieilles lumières

1937

je suis ce cours de sable qui glisse
entre le galet et la dune
la pluie d'été pleut sur ma vie
sur moi ma vie qui me fuit me poursuit
et finira le jour de son commencement

cher instant je te vois
dans ce rideau de brume qui recule
où je n'aurai plus à fouler ces longs seuils mouvants
et vivrai le temps d'une porte
qui s'ouvre et se referme

1948

que ferais-je sans ce monde sans visage sans questions
où être ne dure qu'un instant où chaque instant
verse dans le vide dans l'oubli d'avoir été
sans cette onde où à la fin
corps et ombre ensemble s'engloutissent
que ferais-je sans ce silence gouffre des murmures
haletant furieux vers le secours vers l'amour
sans ce ciel qui s'élève
sur la poussière de ses lests

que ferais-je je ferais comme hier comme aujourd'hui
regardant par mon hublot si je ne suis pas seul
à errer et à virer loin de toute vie
dans un espace pantin
sans voix parmi les voix
enfermées avec moi

1948

je voudrais que mon amour meure
qu'il pleuve sur le cimetière
et les ruelles où je vais
pleurant celle qui crut m'aimer

1948

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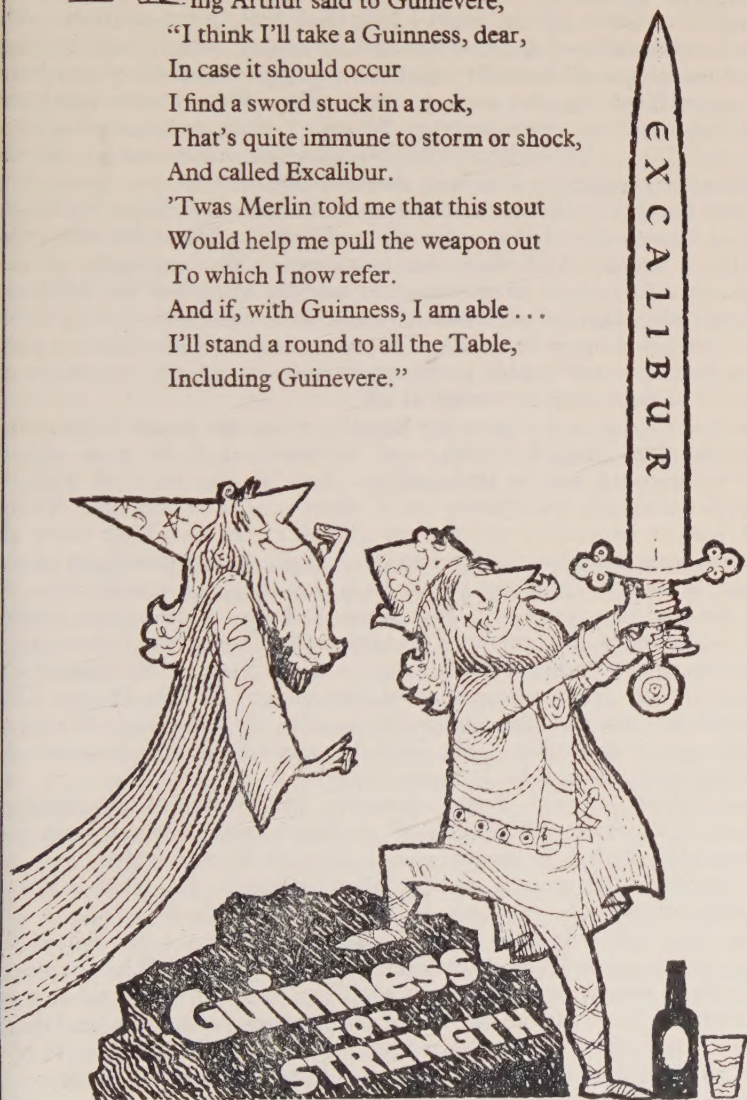
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King Arthur said to Guinevere,
"I think I'll take a Guinness, dear,
In case it should occur
I find a sword stuck in a rock,
That's quite immune to storm or shock,
And called Excalibur.
'Twas Merlin told me that this stout
Would help me pull the weapon out
To which I now refer.
And if, with Guinness, I am able . . .
I'll stand a round to all the Table,
Including Guinevere."



G.E. 3099

Return to South Africa

Though my latest return to South Africa coincided (quite unintentionally) with the country's savage political crisis, my single overwhelming impression of South Africa, when I look back now, is not political. What I chiefly remember of the country are its spaces, simply; all the empty unused landscapes of a country that still seems to lie bereft of any human past, untouched by its own history. Blue sky, brown earth, and people who live unaccommodated between: that is the abiding image of South Africa. There is something remote, far-sunken about the land dwarfing the people who live in it, and making them, in turn, seem remote from one another. Divided and self-divided again, they live: the English speaking whites, the Afrikaans-speaking whites, the black-skinned peoples speaking a multitude of their own languages. Yet, strangely, it wasn't the blacks who seemed most remote to me this time, but the Afrikaners the Boers, who claim, of all South Africans, to be most truly South African. If they are, it is because, in a lost country, they are most lost: a people with a past they are unable to recognize for what it was, a present that is hateful to them, and no future at all.

The trains cross and recross the Karroo, where the gaunt *koppies* stand out of the veld, littered untidily with boulders, as if the gods who had made them could not be bothered to clean up the mess of their own materials; alongside the railway track, there runs the clean blue National Road, and at intervals a moving car glitters on it, travelling faster than the train, yet seeming to make no progress at all against the spaces of earth and sky beyond. Then one comes to a tiny bleached station; the train waits for another train, or for nothing, and moves on again, north or south. North lies Johannesburg and the gold mines, with all their shining dumps among the suburbs; southward is Cape Town, "the fairest Cape we saw in our circumnavigation of the globe," as Sir Francis Drake described it – still fair, too, classically so, with the mountains to one side and the sea to the other. But how far apart from one another these cities are, what silences lie between them!

Space, then, is vivid in the memory; and so too, unexpectedly, is poverty. Of course, the poverty of the blacks was expected; and yet it came as a shock, it is so much uglier and more degraded than one could truly recollect, living in a country like England. But this is not the only kind of poverty one sees in South Africa; there are poor white people too, and one sees their houses everywhere: corrugated iron above, tiny *stoeps* in front, a linoleum bareness indoors. The people who live in these houses occupy menial positions, they earn miserable wages, they clamour for credit at the end of each month from their local Indian trader. True, they are far better off than the Africans; true, they are better off than they themselves have ever been in their own history. Yet I remember them: they are poor, threatened people, almost entirely Afrikaans speaking; there are tens of thousands of them, and they live in every town and *dorp* in the country.

How easy it would be, seeing the islands of habitation and poverty in the great emptiness of the country, to imagine South Africa depopulated, stagnating, ignored, as it was through most of the 19th century. But they found diamonds! They struck gold! Then, and only then, did that sad unattractive outpost, which had previously drawn fewer immigrants than Australia or New Zealand, call urgently to Cornish miners and Lithuanian Jews; then the African tribesmen began streaming to the cities, which only then began to grow. Now South Africa supplies half the world's gold and half the world's diamonds; it exports uranium and manganese, fruit and fish and wool. Stark on the veld the cities grew, and still grow: cities of apartment houses and department stores, private swimming pools and parking problems. The trains and planes run on time; the radio advertises Drene shampoo and Pepsodent toothpaste; the newspapers appear and are avidly read; the factories send their smoke into the air; the universities do research into the origins of heart disease. (Why, why are the Africans so much less prone to heart disease than the whites?) Crudity still marks the manners of the people, black and white alike, still marks even their faces; but who could be surprised to find so recently developed a country crude and provincial? And if the cities are still small by European or American standards, it must be remembered that half the cities' populations travel in to do their work, and travel out again miles, to the shadow cities that lie around every named city. From his trains the white man sees these shadow cities: rows of small barrack-buildings, marching across the sides of barren nameless hills.

The contrasts of silence and noise, isolation and busyness, poverty and wealth, are in themselves bewildering; and yet at the same time they help to make plain the nature of the conflicts which rack the country.

The English-speaking – that is, those who are of English descent, and the Jews who are associated with them – still own the cities; they own the mines, the factories, the department stores, the homes in the expensive suburbs. For the sake of the mines, the English fought the Boers, in the Anglo-Boer War at the beginning of this century, and defeated them. After the Boers had been defeated, the English were magnanimous to them, and gave them self-government; but the English kept the mines and were contemptuous of the people to whom they had been so magnanimous. The English now are a minority among the whites, and there is not a single English South African on the government benches in the Houses of Assembly; but the English retain in their hands most of the wealth of the country. And though they themselves hardly know it, they retain too something of a pragmatic, self-seeking, and hence self-saving temperateness that seems to have come to them with their language, and with as little effort as their language. Individual English South Africans may loathe the blacks as heartily as individual Afrikaners; but as a group, the English-speaking would. I am convinced, try to make peace with the blacks, while there is still time.

But politically they are powerless. Power is in the hands of the Nationalist Afrikaners; and with them the case is entirely different. Who can describe an unknown people in a paragraph? It is better perhaps not to make the attempt, especially when the people is as complex and as psychologically riven as the Afrikaners. All one can ask is that the

attempt be made to imagine a European people who settled in a strange land, at the foot of a remote continent, and who then trekked away into the interior – trekked away not only in search of better lands and wider pastures, but fleeing, always, from the dominance of Europe. Even when “Europe” was the Holland they came from, they resented it; when “Europe” became an alien England, they redoubled their efforts to get away from it. Significantly, their language ceased to be Dutch and became Afrikaans, a language that Hollanders now have difficulty in following; and what happened to their language happened too to many of the other laws and institutions which they had brought with them. Even their Christianity seemed to become more an Old Testament than a New Testament creed; and in the image of the Chosen People, wandering among the heathen in the wilderness, the Afrikaners saw themselves.

The heathen were the blacks, whom the Boers met as they moved forward, and whom they fought and fought again, and conquered. Then, in the interior of the country, they established their two Republics. And by a cruel and malignant irony (as it still seems to many of them) they established their pastoral republics right on top of the diamond and gold fields. The diamond fields were taken away from them easily, by the British; the gold fields were more difficult to filch, and a war had to be fought before the Boers were broken and the investors in London felt their money to be safe. And the British broke the Boers again, when the war was over, by their contempt: the contempt of the victor for the vanquished, of the rich for the poor, of the metropolitan for the colonial, of the townee for the “backvelder,” of the man who spoke English for the man who spoke an unrecognised and (at that time) unwritten *taal*. Contempt was worse than war, turned defeat into rancour, persisting from generation to generation. And to this day the background of the Afrikaner Nationalist movement has remained an unquestioned enmity toward the blacks, a deep sense of grievance toward the English, and an immense sensitivity to insult. Its hope, so far as it has any, has remained the two lost but unforgotten Republics.

And what of the Africans, outnumbering by three or four to one both the English and Afrikaans speaking whites? In the Reserves a kind of semi-tribal life still persists, and the tourists can see the women grinding corn and making beer. But the young men are absent, away in the cities, and though they come to the cities empty handed, they bring with them qualities that are the secret envy and wonder of every white man: a lithe-ness of limb, a quickness to laughter, an ability to endure discomfort that is as much an attitude of the mind as a quality of the body. But they come, too, it must be added, pitifully ignorant of what is needed to wage successfully a political and social struggle like the one in which, willy-nilly, they have been thrust: they come illiterate, they come ignorant of the most rudimentary technical skills, they come divided among themselves. Leaders are emerging, the skills are being acquired; but about the mass one must say that only a people shorn of their own history would have been so slow in formulating a national ideal for which to struggle; and only a people so poor that they can in some measure be contented with, or even count as riches, their wages and possessions in the great city slums, would ever have tolerated the conditions under which they live. One can say too that only a people who have never learned to handle firearms

or explosives would hitherto have offered so little effective fight against their own servitude.

Consider again what has been the experience of the Afrikaner in relation to the English : the Afrikaner has suffered defeat, dispossession, and contumely. Then consider what the black man has suffered at the hands of the white : defeat, dispossession, and contumely. Consider too that the Afrikaners have hitherto been primarily a pastoral people, only now being drawn into the cities : is this not true, too, of the Africans? Afrikaner and African alike remember their defeats with bitterness ; alike they are frightened and confused by their own emergence into cities that belong always to others ; alike they hunger with an unceasing hunger for the goods and glories of these same cities : the fish-and-chip shops, the Coca-Cola girls with naked legs twenty feet high, the great pneumatic cars, the cinemas, the houses with private swimming pools. (The full-fed intellectuals of Great Britain and the United States may already have turned away in disgust from these things ; but for people who come from the isolation and the poverty I have described, the products of the factories and assembly plants are the wonders of the world, to be seized, emulated, adored. And if, in their fastidiousness, the intellectuals of Britain and the United States should ever forget this, they will show themselves to be unthinking and irresponsible fools. In this context South Africa is but a single instance of an almost universal truth.)

Of course, to return to the comparison between the Africans and the Afrikaners, there are immense differences between the two. Whatever the disadvantages he has suffered vis-à-vis the English, the Afrikaner has had every advantage over the black. The Afrikaner has always been master of the African, he has always had some knowledge of technology, he has always had a say in the government over him : in a word, he has always had a white skin. Yet the parallel between the two groups remains true enough and close enough to make what I am writing hateful to both African and Afrikaner, who cannot but hate the reflections of themselves each sees in the other's features. There is no peace for them, no common cause, in the similitude, that's for sure. And yet – and yet

Over the last few decades, and certainly since the beginning of the Second World War, South Africa has become steadily wealthier and wealthier. The "poor whites," as a class, have all but disappeared, though many whites remain comparatively poor ; the Afrikaner share in the commerce and industry of the country, though still very small, is growing with every year that passes. At the same time, the earnings of the blacks – though they remain deplorably low – have risen even faster, proportionately, than the earnings of the whites, and a tiny African middle class has begun to emerge. For this reason there is a deep reluctance on the part of many Africans to risk what they have in an all-out political war against the whites ; and for this reason, too, it is just possible that the Afrikaners, on their side, might be prepared to make concessions that would have been unthinkable to them only a few years ago. The more they share in it, the more the Afrikaners value the prosperity of the country, which can be sustained only by peace.

And not only have the Afrikaners grown more prosperous ; by their repeated political victories over the "English" opposition, the Afrikaner

Nationalists have managed to assuage something of their own rankling sense of defeat and injury. Materially and psychologically, the Afrikaners have a greater stake than ever before in the well-being of the country.

This is perhaps the strangest truth about South Africa : *if* the Afrikaner will make concessions, it will be because he now has more to lose, not less, than ever before in his history.

But which, for the Nationalist Afrikaner, is stronger : the voice of his own material hopes for himself, or all the embittered and enraged voices of his own past? Does he want to build more than he wants to destroy? Does he want to live more than he wants to die? At the moment, it is certain, he wants to do both : to build and to destroy; to live and to die.

Death for him has many attractions, and he gives it his dearest names : "the purity of the race," "the destiny of the *volk*," "white civilization," "*baasskap*" (boss-hood). But under these names of life, there lurks the will to war and destruction : destruction of the enemy and the self alike. Why should the Afrikaner Nationalist not have wanted to destroy? The country that he wanted to destroy – did he, until very recently, feel it to be his?

Now he feels it is more his than ever before, and he is less eager to shed his blood in its name, and more eager to live in it. So the emphasis has shifted from naked *baasskap* to the more famous word, *apartheid*. Pitiously, the Afrikaner Nationalists plead that they, like any other national group on earth, are entitled to a country of their own, and that South Africa *is* their country – which is true, and yet not true, for unlike any other national group they have never had a country of their *own*. They have always shared South Africa with the Africans, who are now beginning to claim the country as their own too. So from the truth that if they are to live in it at all, the country must be shared, the Afrikaner Nationalists recoil into the monstrous delusion of *apartheid*. Let the Africans, they say, have a country, or countries, of their own, within South Africa; as long as we can have a country of our own there too. We will create "Bantu National Homes,"* the government cries; we will divide South Africa justly and impartially and live in our separate communities as equals.

As equals? No, not quite.

The Bantu National Homes are to be the already eroded, overcrowded, and hungry Reserves, slightly expanded. (Though no expansion has yet taken place.) Cities, mines, fertile farmlands, are all to remain in "white" South Africa. Within their Bantu National Homes, the Africans are to have self-government, "when they are ripe for it." In the meantime, every single official is to be appointed by the white South African government, which alone is to decide when "ripeness" has come to the blacks.

So much for the putative Bantu National Homes. What about "white" South Africa? Is that to be denuded of the black labour on which its economy totally depends? By no means. The blacks are going to continue living in the "white" areas, but on the understanding that they are

* "Bantu" is the official government word for the blacks in South Africa. "Africans"—the word used everywhere else—sounds too much like "Afrikaner" for its use to be encouraged locally.

"visitors" there only, and thus not entitled to any political rights whatsoever. True, they will actually *be* residents; millions of them will be born in the "white" areas, in the cities and on the farms, and will die in them too; but in some mystic and unexplained way they will not belong where they are born and die, but to the distant and as yet non-existent "National Homes" mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Such, in outline, are the main projected developments of the *apartheid* policy. These outlines may be decorated as taste and inclination suggest. For instance, when those Bantu National Homes are fully established, each smashed tribe in its own Home, the Homeland authorities are going to appoint "ambassadors" to the "white" areas of South Africa. These ambassadors are not, however, to represent the Homeland in the courts of the white government (that would be a bit pointless, seeing that the white government appoints the Homeland government, anyway). No, these ambassadors are going to represent to the blacks who live in the "white" cities their own – that is, the blacks' own – Homeland. Can you work it out? This will have the effect, you see, of creating *loyalty* among the urbanized blacks to those Homelands of theirs; and a very important task it will be too, seeing that none of them will ever have seen their Homelands. And do you know what is the shape of the ideal city of the future, according to Dr. Verwoerd? The ideal city of the future, according to Dr. Verwoerd, is to be round, and cut into segments radiating from a centre, like a sliced cake, with a different race in each slice. (For there are not only blacks and whites in South Africa; there are Cape Coloreds, Indians . . . any number of possible classifications.) Then, you see, each race will be able to travel to and from the centre of the town *without ever crossing into the territory of another race!* And this bizarre, multi-coloured, and segmented city, it must not be forgotten, is to be situated in what is solemnly, as a final touch of absurdity, always called *white South Africa!*

Grotesque? Laughable? Paranoid? Certainly. And all the more dangerous for being so. I will give later my reasons for saying this: at the moment I want to repeat that all of what I have written above are the government's hopes or plans for the future. In the meantime, and with an eye to this idyllic future, things are much simpler; all the government has to do, as the first step in implementing its policies, is to make it plain to the blacks that they don't belong where they happen to be. And this has been most zealously done already. Politically, economically, socially, every miserable little right the Africans had – of representation, of consultation, of organization – has been taken away from them; the "pass laws" have been made more stringent; and the policy of "separate facilities" has been introduced even in places where it was unknown before. (And heaven knows there were few enough places in South Africa before where black and white could ever mingle casually outside their work.) In addition, penalties of the most severe kind have been introduced for any infringement of the government's new laws: for example, if you urge a black man to stay away from work, and he does so, both he and you run the risk of being flogged, jailed for five years, and subsequently banished to a remote part of the country.

But this, all *this*, is not oppression, the government asseverates; they are merely the measures preliminary to carrying out the policy of "positive *apartheid*," as described above. And now that the word *apartheid* has

fallen into international disfavour, the Nationalists are trying to think up alternatives to it. *Aparte ontwikkeling* (separate development) is one phrase that has been suggested; another is *aparte vryheid* (separate freedom).

In a way, I suppose, the fact that the Afrikaner Nationalists feel the need to talk of *aparte vryheid*, rather than of plain *baasskap*, is an advance of a kind. But if it is an advance in one direction, it is a retreat in another. The talk of *baasskap* at least had a direct and evidential relationship to the facts of South African life. The talk of "positive *apartheid*" or *aparte vryheid* has no relation at all to anything visible, or anything conceivable, in modern South Africa. And I repeat that it is the total unreality, the dreamlike and utterly fantastic character of the government's utterances that makes them most dangerous. It is this, too, which helps to give the events in South Africa their distinctively 20th-century character.

Of course, the South African problem is usually seen as being very much a part of a particular series of 20th-century events: the throwing off, by the former colonial peoples, of their white overlords. And it is true enough that these events are a very important factor in the development of national consciousness among the blacks in South Africa, and one that will obviously become more and more important, as the territories to the north one by one assume self-government. But the comparison of South Africa with the other territories of Africa, and with the new states of Asia, is not altogether acceptable. There is one great difference between South Africa and the countries with which it is compared, and that is that in South Africa the whites are not just officials, traders, and missionaries, as they were in most of the other colonial territories. Nor are they even white "settlers," like the *colons* of Algeria, who insist that they are before all else Frenchmen, and then only, if at all, Algerians. The white South Africans are true inhabitants of their country; most of them have never known any other, and the Afrikaners have not even the most tenuous link with any metropolitan power.

Once it is accepted that the whites in South Africa are there by right as much of South Africa as the Africans themselves, the country's problems seem then to resemble not so much the classic colonial situation as a kind of paradigm of the history of much of Europe in the 19th century. South Africa is going through an industrial revolution very much like that which England underwent in the 19th century; the mass of its people are fighting for the rights of political representation which the people of Europe fought for a hundred years ago. And like those people then, the Africans are confronted with an oligarchy of wealth and power which seems determined, at almost any cost, to cling to all of its wealth and power.

But one cannot wage a 19th-century struggle in the middle of the 20th century: every century uses its own weapons. And the weapons in the hands of the present government in South Africa are indeed those of the 20th century. They include Sten guns, Saracen armoured cars, walkie-talkie radios, and jet planes (and would the Bastille have been stormed if its defenders had been equipped with these weapons? Could the people of Hungary, better armed and a hundred times more skilled in modern combat than the Africans, prevail against the armed superiority of the

Russians?) But perhaps the greatest weapon in the hands of the South African government is the Big Lie, the delusion which is so far removed from reality that it cannot even be rationally controverted. The Nationalist Big Lie is, of course, the policy of *apartheid*.

Students of totalitarianism, like Hannah Arendt or George Orwell, have told us that in order to make effective use of the great delusion, one needs a press, a radio, mass rallies, youth movements, secret hierarchies of power within the party itself; and all these the Afrikaner Nationalist movement has. One needs to iterate and reiterate the grossest untruths so often that even one's opponents, let alone one's supporters, find it impossible to believe the evidence of their eyes; one has to destroy in one's supporters their sense of where their own material interests lie, so that for the sake of "higher" ideological interests – that is, for the sake of the delusion itself – they will sacrifice their goods and their lives.

Compared with the Nazis of Germany, or the Stalinists of Russia, the Afrikaner Nationalists are beginners, bunglers, lazybones, lovers of the easy life; some of them even do have a positive respect for the processes of the law and the traditions of parliamentary debate.* Their supporters have not been driven to desperation by hunger or any recent war; the leaders themselves have a deep hankering for the good opinion of the world. But they *are* trying to impose a delusion upon the real world; and there are people among them who have announced, repeatedly, that they would sooner kill and be killed than give up one single fragment of their dream.

And one of the most dangerous things about the politics of delusion is that its example must be contagious, by its very nature. Already from African leaders one is beginning to hear statements which in their unreality match those of the government. "Africa for the Africans!" – is that really a rational call in South Africa, where black and white, Indian and Coloured, already live and must continue to live? Or to give another example: "What," I once asked a liberal white, who was prophesying the imminent and total success of the revolution, "are you going to *do* with the Afrikaners, after the revolution?" The question seemed to irritate him; eventually he replied, "Teach them to speak Zulu!" Thus, as brusquely as Dr. Verwoerd ever dreams of doing, was a nation disposed of – by a man who thinks of himself as a liberal.

Even with the best will in the world, South Africa's problems would be extremely difficult to solve: indeed, I do not believe that they ever can be "solved" in any simple sense of the word. Furthermore, one of the reasons why the country's problems are so intractable is that there is so much justice in the claims of all the contending parties. Particularly it is necessary to say this about the Afrikaners – and not only because I have

* In the years before and during the Second World War the Nationalist movement in South Africa was directly infected by Nazism; and Dr. Verwoerd himself was found, in a court judgment given during the war, to have consciously used the newspaper he was then editing as an instrument of Nazi propaganda. (Dr. Verwoerd's explanation of the court's finding was that the judge was a Jew.)

In fairness, it must be added that successive Nationalist governments, including Dr. Verwoerd's, have been scrupulously correct in their attitude toward the South African Jewish community; and more than correct in their friendliness toward the State of Israel.

written about them so unflatteringly here. The Afrikaners are not inhuman monsters, altogether unlike any other people who have ever been seen. For the most part, they are very much like other people: most of them are conformists, who are taken along by their society, as people are everywhere. And when one thinks of them as a group, it is impossible to regard their past struggles and their bleak future without being moved by a sense of profound compassion for them. They have never had a chance, one cannot but feel: history has again and again tricked and cheated them. Now they are trapped in their own history; and they can escape from it only by making an effort that almost no other people has ever been asked to make.

There are real, as well as unreal, problems in South Africa; there is a reason for and reason in, the fears of the Afrikaners; there is justice in some of the demands they make upon the world.

But to say all this is not to yield one inch in one's belief that their present leadership has set itself on a course which has made a complex and difficult problem a thousandfold more difficult; which is turning the inevitable dangers of political and social life in South Africa into the certainties of suicide and murder.

I have never shared the views of those who foresaw in South Africa a single violent and apocalyptic Day of Reckoning approaching. To my mind, the Africans were, and still are, too weak for any single paroxysm of theirs to overthrow the power of the state. People outside South Africa do not appreciate the sheer *size* of the white establishment in South Africa; nor how irresistible is the might of a modern army and police force, equipped with all the arms it could want; they do not know that the white oligarchy in South Africa mans its armed forces entirely, so that there is no possibility of subversion from within. Conversely, people abroad do not realize how much divided among themselves the Africans are, how unskilled politically and technically; how uneager they are to risk the little they have for a cause which has only just begun to seem plausible to them. For all these reasons it seemed inevitable that, rather than a revolution, South Africa would have to pass through a long series of crises, each one very similar to the crisis it has just gone through, and the one which it had experienced previously in 1953.

That, I believe, is still true; but while it once seemed possible that the crises, and the pauses in between, could be prolonged indefinitely, for generations perhaps, this no longer seems at all likely to me. Ahead of South Africa there still lies a series of hideous days, scattered perhaps over many years; no one can guess how many. But not over generations. Not, perhaps, over a single generation. And this is true for many reasons.

First of all, the strength of the African attack in the recent crisis surprised everyone, including (I am told) the African leaders themselves. It is true that the outbreaks were beaten down, and the country now is silent again. But when will the next campaign take place, and what form will it take? It is impossible to answer these questions; but one cannot refrain from asking them. To compare the campaign of 1953 with the campaign of 1960 is to realize just how far and how fiercely the African people have come forward in the last seven years.

Then, the reaction of the world to events in South Africa is of the greatest importance, and, for reasons both of morality and expediency, it is going to continue to be strong and uniformly hostile. South Africa depends on the countries outside it for trade, for investment, even for arms; and even apart from any question of sanction or boycott, the condemnation of world opinion has an accumulatively weakening effect upon the morale of the Afrikaner Nationalist – precisely because of his particular historical sensitivity to insult. It is true that being sensitive in this way, insults and reproaches from abroad *may* make South Africa's leaders more fanatic in their paranoia than they already are. From my own observation, however, I would guess that even if this were true of the leaders, it would not be true of the followers; the hostility from abroad unquestionably weakens them more than it strengthens them. They simply cannot stand being hated and despised, indefinitely, again, again!

And in talking of the morale of the Afrikaner Nationalist I have already come to the third reason why I believe the whites in South Africa might not hold out as long as their own physical strength would enable them to. The last thing I would want to do is to minimize the gravity of the crisis the country has just endured; yet I must say that the pressure brought to bear upon the government by the African campaigners was not, as things go in this world, very great; it was never sufficiently sustained over sufficiently wide an area really to threaten the authority of the state. But to meet even this degree of pressure the government called out the army, declared a state of emergency, arrested hundreds of political prisoners, turned the country upside down almost more effectively than the campaigners had done. What more can they do next time, then? And next time the pressures will be more severe, let it be remembered; and may take forms which the government has not yet even remotely been required to face. (Remember Ireland, Palestine, Cyprus, Algeria?)

An army could deal with the pressures, whatever forms they may take. But the white people of South Africa could not – not over many years, not over generations. They are not an army; they are people, with families, children, businesses, private ambitions. It may be argued that so too are the *colons* of Algeria, who have yet managed to hold out for years against pressures more severe than any that are likely in the near future to be brought against the white South Africans. But the *colons* insist that they are Frenchmen, and have the might of France to prove their claim – an army of 500,000 fighting for them. The white South Africans are quite alone; no metropolitan power will ever come to their assistance; they will have to do their own fighting, and pay for it all, out of their own purses and with their own lives. I do not believe that even if they were united among themselves they could do it for long. And they are not united: to the English the government is an alien and incompetent one; not all Afrikaners, by any means, are Nationalists; the Nationalists, for the very first time, are beginning to show some tiny signs of dissension among themselves.

But the last and most difficult question of all remains: is it possible to envision in South Africa a multi-racial society, each group in it meeting the others on equal terms?

There are two sides from which one must attempt to answer this question: the white and the black. About the blacks it is often said that even if the whites in South Africa were now, in good grace and with the best of intentions, to begin making real concessions to the Africans, the latter are so enraged and embittered at what they have suffered that they will continue to work reasonlessly and revengefully for a "Black South Africa." And to support this argument people put forward the cases of Kenya or Northern Rhodesia, say, where the government has granted concessions which in South Africa have not yet been dreamed of, and where many blacks nevertheless seem to remain implacable in their opposition to the whites.

The case of South Africa is, I believe, very different. After all, it is possible to imagine Kenya or Northern Rhodesia clean of whites — for though they are "settler colonies," their white populations can be counted in tens of thousands. But to imagine South Africa clean of its millions of whites, one has to be insane. And the blacks in South Africa are not — yet — insane. To this day they are grateful for friendship which is offered to them (though a riot-maddened mob is another matter); they are eager to learn the skills which the whites can impart to them; they are eager to benefit from the products of the white investment in the country. There is no doubt that the longer the whites maintain a brute-force supremacy, the more certainly will it be replaced, ultimately, and at unthinkable cost, by a brute-force black supremacy. But if the whites yield, crack, give way before too much blood has been shed, then the blacks will, I feel, be ready to live with them.

But even if that were true, is it possible to imagine the whites of South Africa ever admitting the blacks as their equals? To the overwhelming majority of whites in South Africa the blacks are at best objects of patronage; and at worst objects of loathing, dread, and contempt. Can these people change the attitudes which are bred into them by every shred of tradition, custom, and usage they possess? I have implied that habits of subservience among the Africans die hard; how much harder will be the death of the habits of authority and superiority on the part of the whites.

Well, I have never thought they will die easily; they will never die altogether, for no habit ever does, in history. But the same habits can assume very different forms and issue in very different actions when circumstances compel them to. And vague and unsatisfactory though this formulation may seem, it will have to do to describe the changes that may take place among the whites who want to continue living in South Africa; and these changes, once they begin, may take place much faster than now seems possible.

In talking of this aspect of the South African problem people often compare the country with the Southern states of the United States. Look, they say, at the whites there, who cling to their contempt and hatred of the Negroes, even though the Negroes are so outnumbered, and offer no real threat to the dominance of the whites in the country at large. What can you expect, they ask, if such is the tenacity of human prejudice, of the whites in South Africa, who are outnumbered and to whose dominance a real threat is offered?

What people overlook, in putting forward this argument, is that it is possible to reverse its terms and arrive at quite a different conclusion.

Surely, it is *because* the Negroes in the South are so outnumbered and powerless that the whites there have been able to afford their prejudices. What does it cost the Southern white to "keep the Nigra in his place"? The economy of his region is possibly developed more slowly as a result; and his country as a whole suffers in its bid for friendship among the coloured nations of the world. But these are remote and impalpable considerations for the white Southerner, compared to the satisfaction of his immediate fears and aggressions. His livelihood, whatever it may be, is placed in no danger when he puts on his robe and prances through the streets of a Southern town; still less is his life.

But in South Africa, "keeping the Kaffir in his place" may well cost the white his livelihood and his life. And to keep his life and livelihood a man will sometimes put aside others of his most cherished possessions; sometimes even his dreams and delusions and prejudices.

In any case, it must not for a moment be imagined that white and black in South Africa are not already living together. It is true that every South African city is two cities; every town, two towns; every *dorp*, two *dorps*: one black, one white. It is true that every post office, public lavatory, railway station (even every footbridge over every railway station) is double; true that the white man goes into his cinemas and beaches and cafés and never sees any blacks, except for those who happen to be working there; true, too, that these divisions are being extended with a frantic and sickening zeal, wherever one turns. Yet, in the face of whatever denials and divisions the government may attempt to foster, anyone still in his senses can see that every day, everywhere in South Africa, without cessation, black and white men are meeting one another, talking to one another, learning from one another, becoming more and more like each other. This is the single overwhelming truth about the country, and it is a truth that continues whether or not there are riots, midnight arrests, liquor raids, pass raids, old oppressions or new *apartheid* legislation before the House of Assembly. Every unnoticed and unreported day that passes in South Africa ties the black and white communities more closely together; and though the contiguity arouses the hatred, it lulls too, it makes brothers of those who hate each other.

And their brotherhood is figured forth in one fact which is hardly ever mentioned or commented upon: the fact that the "whites" of South Africa are no longer white. If you come from abroad, from Europe, where you have lived for years among those who are truly European, it is impossible not to be struck by the admixture of non-white blood which has passed into the veins of those who claim still, after three hundred years, to be "European." In noticing this, we cannot console ourselves with pictures of an ultimate indiscriminate peace which will come to rest over the country. Before then the generations must live, the present generation at least. How will it live? The answer is: Badly. Bitterly. Wastefully. In pain. And one cannot set a date to the bitterness and sadness and waste and pain. But nor can one set a date to the life.

And that is why, whatever way the country goes, it will not go the way Dr. Verwoerd wants it to go. People hear much of the crises in South Africa; they do not hear of the indifference there is in South Africa, the lethargy, the greed. But as surely as the forces of enlightenment.

compassion and justice, these human failings or weaknesses, too, are working against the government. And this should cause us no surprise. To deny full humanity to others is to make the attempt to deny it – in all its strengths and weaknesses – to oneself. Proudly, boastfully, the attempt is being made in South Africa, as it has been made a thousand times before in a thousand different places; miserably, squalidly, painfully, it is going to fail, as it has always failed before.

With acknowledgement to *Commentary* © American Jewish Committee.

DAN JACOBSON, who was born in South Africa but now lives in England, is the author of four novels – the most recent, *Evidence of Love* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson) – and a collection of short stories.

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Three Poems of Pablo Neruda

translated by BEN BELITT

A LEMON

Out of lemon-flowers
loosed
on the moonlight, love's
lashed and insatiable
essences,
sodden with fragrance,
the lemon-tree's yellow
emerges;
the lemons
move down
from the tree's planetarium.

Delicate merchandise!
The harbors are big with it –
bazaars
for the light and the
barbarous gold.
We open
the halves
of a miracle,
and a clotting of acids
brims
into the starry
divisions:
creation's
original juices,
irreducible, changeless,
alive:
so the freshness lives on
in a lemon,
in the sweet-smelling house of the rind,
the proportions, arcane and acerb.

Cutting the lemon
the knife
leaves a little
cathedral:
alcoves unguessed by the eye
that open acidulous glass
to the light; topazes
riding the droplets,
altars,
aromatic facades.

So, while the hand
holds the cut of the lemon,
half a world
on a trencher,
the gold of the universe
wells
to your touch :
a cup yellow
with miracles,
a breast and a nipple
perfuming the earth ;
a flashing made fruitage,
the diminutive fire of a planet.

IN PRAISE OF OIL

Near the cereal
hum, undulations
of wind in the oatfields

a bulking of silver

the olive
of rigorous kindred,
a terrestrial knot
at its heart :
the felicitous
olive
stainless
as though from the fingers
that summoned
the snail
from the sea,
and the dove :
creation's
immaculate
nipple
in numberless
greens,
in
the drouth
of the olive-grove
where
only
the azure, cicada and sky,
endure
on the obdurate
cobble --

that prodigy
there,
the sheath
of the consummate
olive,
zodiacs
filling the leaves :
and later,
a vessel
of miracle,
the dropping of oil.
I have loved
the dominions of oil :
Chacabuco's Chilenean
groves,
platinum plumes
in the morning,
a forest of feathers,
on the peak's
crenelations;
or in Anacapri,
in Tyrrhenian dazzle, aloft,
the despairs of the olive;
or the Spain
of the mapmaker's Europe,
a blackening basket of olives
seen among lemon-leaves,
like a powdery gust from the sea.

Oil for
an olla's
epiphany,
the partridge's pedestal,
keys to a mayonnaise heaven,
the bland and the savory
over the lettuce-leaf –
supernatural, too, in the hells
of the archiepiscopal mackerel.
Oil in our voices,
our singing assemblage
intoning
the might
of your intimate
suavity;
and Castilian,
that language of oil :
oleaginous syllables,
the needful, ambrosial
words
like your redolent substances.

For the olive
will sing with the wine :
the ripening light will inhabit us.
Out of earth's providence
I unbind
inexhaustible peace from the oil,
irreducible green,
the treasured excess moving down to us,
the gout welling up in the oil.

A SMELL OF CORDWOOD

Later, when stars
opened out to the cold,
I opened the door.

Night :

on an ocean
of galloping hooves.

Then from the dark
of the house, like a hand,
the savage
aroma
of wood on the woodpile.

An odor
that lives
like a tree,
a visible odor.
As if cordwood pulsed like a tree.

Vesture
made visible.

A visible
breaking of branches.

I turned back
to
the house
in the circle
of darkening
balsam.
Beyond,
a sparkle
of motes in the sky,
like lodestones.
But the wood-smell
took hold of
my heart,
like a hand and its fingers,
like jasmine,
like a memory cherished.

Not harrowing
pine-odor,
not that way,
not slashed
eucalyptus,
not like
the green
exhalation
of arbors –
but
something more recondite,
a fragrance
that gives itself
once, and once
only,
among all things visible,
a world
or a house, a night
by the wintering water :
that awaited me there,
occult in the smell
of the rose,
an earth-heart plucked out,
dominion
that struck like a wave,
a sundered
duration,
and was lost in my blood
when I opened the door
of the night.

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I

Other men have won her love,
The love of this lonely person
Who wears her sorrow like a shawl,
But they were young or Greek or handsome.

II

When boys and girls go out to play
The boy who is left behind
Is no use to the girl who is left behind.

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Ballet at New York

Who goes to the ballet? Wherever one goes, whether it be Paris, London, or New York, the ballet has become the property of the middle classes, the middle-brows, and the *poseurs*. The audience is recognisable any place, and so is the dancing: cute and full of wisecracks. Even the best choreographers work up romantic pot-boilers that would have seemed old-fashioned in the twenties. What passes as modern ballet is too often the revival of Fokine's pre-World War One pieces, or else the sentimental, folksy, or teenage atmosphere of our mass culture. There is no equivalent to Diaghileff's company in our time, nor does the ballet attract our young Picasso's and Stravinsky's. Because of this, intellectuals and artists regard the ballet in the same light as they would any off-shoot of Hollywood or Broadway. In fact, the situation parallels that of the theatre a few years ago. When, one wonders, will there be a work of our time the equivalent of *Les Sylphides*, *Giselle*, or *Petrouchka*. Until that happens the ballet will remain second-rate, intellectually phony, and basically pretentious.

An obvious solution to the present dilemma of the ballet might be the incorporation of jazz with its rich tradition of African and American Negro dancing. With this in mind, I decided to see two new "jazz pieces" that the New York City Center announced this season. Certainly if any company should be able to do a jazz work it would be the City Center which has specialized in abstract rather than narrative ballets. Its director is George Balanchine, a major choreographer who once worked with Diaghileff, and who, in the thirties, changed the direction of American ballet from story-telling to linear and geometric abstraction. Balanchine has already created one masterpiece – *Concerto Barocco* (1941) is still the finest achievement of abstract ballet – and one would imagine that he might be the person to lift contemporary ballet from its stuffed chair. A problem, of course, would be City Center's dancers. City Center has its own tradition of dancing which is rather different from that of most European companies. The City Center favours hard energetic loose-limbed dancing, often similar to that seen in Broadway musical shows. At its best it might be described as a self-denying discipline in which the dancer is subordinated to the movement of the dance. The vices of New York dancing are, however, its lack of grace, its technical inadequacies (one seldom has seen so many dancers off the beat) and an unfortunate habit of treating the human limbs as pistons. I suppose it boils down to this: if European dancers of both sexes are often splendidly feminine, American dancers always seem to be masculine. However, what should be better for an age of abstraction and sexual equality than the American style?

One should have been able to see the problem as soon as the dances were announced. With the rest of the ballet companies of the world, the City Center has in recent years sold the gate to the new mass middle-brow audiences. If other companies are picking the bones of the Ballets Russes, the City Center and Balanchine are sugar-coating their own abstract classicism until it is now unbearably dull. There are times when – as

with *Figure in the Carpet* – City Center makes even the stodginess of the Royal Ballet seem lively. In fact, the first ballet, *Jazz Concert*, was even worse than one might have expected. The dances were set to 1920-ish pieces by Stravinsky, Poulenc, and Milhaud. The choreography was a mixture of the current formless Broadway musical idiom (derived from Jerome Robbins) and the usual pretentious symbolism that infects most modern ballet (lonely youth in blue jeans silhouetted against tall building meant to represent . . .). In fairness to Balanchine I should mention that he only wrote one of the four dances. However Balanchine is also partly responsible for the origin and dissemination of the *Kitsch* that passes on both sides of the Atlantic as modern dance. If Balanchine had not let the style become the dominant one at City Center it is doubtful whether it would have gained its present currency. Certainly it has made the City Center but a higher cultural extension of Broadway and the other mass entertainment media.

Having criticized Balanchine for failing to keep his own standards, I must admit that City Center's second jazz ballet, his own work, was surprisingly good. To begin with, Balanchine commissioned some new music for the piece from Gunther Schuller. Schuller is perhaps the best of the younger American twelve-tone composers and a working jazz musician. The piece that emerged, *Variants*, reflected Schuller's pre-occupation with what he calls "third stream music": a combination of jazz and concert music. Schuller is not one of those composers who use jazzy effects or sentimental tunes as a kind of window dressing for traditional musical forms. Schuller has tried to find some point at which jazz and traditional music might meet; he has tried including passages for improvisation in some of his compositions, and in others he has pitted, in concerto fashion, a jazz band against an orchestra. For this ballet, Schuller very sensibly composed a set of variations for both orchestra and jazz band. The (jazz) band was the Modern Jazz Quartet, which consists of piano, bass, vibraphone, and drums. Schuller's approach to the variations was this: after a Webern-ish orchestral introduction, the individual members of the quartet took a series of what jazz musicians call solos, but which were sometimes backed, or counterpointed, by the orchestra. The final variation was played by the quartet, which was then joined by the orchestra. I cannot be certain of how much improvisation there actually was by the Modern Jazz Quartet. John Lewis (piano) and Percy Heath (bass) seem to have played their parts as written; on the other hand, Milt Jackson (vibraphone) clearly played a blues variation on the basic scale. Connie Kay's drumming was as sophisticated as any I have heard, and his solo involved a considerable amount of interplay between the pitch of his cymbals and the orchestral accompaniment. (Many critics did not like *Variants*; they thought that the music was not "hot" enough for jazz.)

Balanchine brought to *Variants* all the talents that he now possesses. If his choreography lacks the linear purity of his earlier work, Balanchine has become one of the most accomplished writers for the dance in our era. For this ballet he brought out every trick he knew, and I admit to being stunned by the complexity of some of his figures. On a purely technical level it is doubtful whether there has been any other ballet with as many tricky, clever, complicated steps as this one has. Even the witty intricacies of *Interplay* seem thin in comparison. The work is certainly

a *tour de force* in the sheer intricacy of Balanchine's writing; but then what does one expect: an almost baroque complexity of linear elements has become Balanchine's most recent trademark.

Balanchine has, I think wisely, followed the form of Schuller's music. The ballet reflects the variations of the composition with the *corps de ballet* balanced against a quartet of dancers, and the dancers dividing into soloists. For every instrumental solo there is a solo or *pas de deux*, and for passages of counterpoint between orchestra and soloist Balanchine has made use of a small *corps de ballet* behind the dancers. Echoing the musical form, the dancers resolve themselves into a final quartet before being joined by the *corps de ballet* and orchestra. The form thus is: a quartet of solo dancers and *corps de ballet* (accompanied by the Modern Jazz Quartet and the orchestra), *pas de deux* by Diana Adams and John Jones (piano solo), solo by Diana Adams (bass solo), *pas de deux* by Melissa Hayden and Arthur Mitchell (vibraphone solo), solo by Melissa Hayden (drum solo), a *pas de quatre* (the MJQ), and finally everyone (MJQ and orchestra).

The dancing was quite good by New York standards. No one, of course, had the grace or technique that is commonly found in the best European dancers. However, it is also questionable whether this kind of dancing requires quite as much grace or personal expression as the older ballets. It certainly is not accidental that hard, forceful dancing has developed alongside the abstract linear qualities of Balanchine's choreography. For example, Diana Adams' almost overly long limbs seemed perfectly adapted to the intellectual qualities of John Lewis' solo, whereas I have often felt in the past that Miss Adams seemed awkward, like an over-grown teenager, when dancing a character part. John Jones and Arthur Mitchell, both Negroes, were also excellent. Melissa Hayden did a very nice job with a very complicated jitterbug-ish (or "jive") solo; this involved many inversions of classical ballet techniques, including the use of heels, rather than the toes, as the basis of her steps.

However, Miss Hayden's solo raises several questions about *Variants* and about the entire problem of modern ballet. The vocabulary of Miss Hayden's solo – a combination of jive gestures and inverted classical technique – has, of course, been around for some time now; it is a basically American contribution to the disease of cleverness that infects contemporary ballet. In Paris, dancers keep their faces turned to the audience, wink, and wiggle their behinds; in America, the language is slightly different: the dancers face the audience, wink, and do a few jivey hip bumps. The language may be slightly different, but the purpose is the same: to seem youthful, clever, colloquial and pleasing to an essentially escapist audience.

The problem remains! What should be the proper vocabulary for modern ballet? In *Variants* Balanchine has tried most of the dance tongues that are now available. The eclecticism of his vocabulary includes classical stances (and their inversions), jive steps (and gestures), modern expressionist dancing (flat-footed, based on the emotive possibilities of the body and its contractions), and the loose-limbed dancing of the Broadway stage. I think it is obvious that all dialects of the dance are not equal. The jive vocabulary is too limited in its emotions and steps. The loose-limbed approach of Broadway – which derives partly from an attempt to

capture the mood of youth, and is partly a degeneration of Balanchine's own preference for sheer motion – lacks depth and any real principles of form. It is also obvious that classical ballet techniques simply won't blend with either the syncopations of jazz or the seemingly free rhythms of contemporary atonal music. That Balanchine should have succeeded in patching together a good ballet out of such disparate languages proves his genius, but this does not really solve the problem of modern dance. What then remains? Well, oddly enough, some of the best moments of *Variants* were when Balanchine made use of modern expressionist dancing – with its body contractions and affirmation of the dance floor. There was a wonderful minute when Diana Adams did a kind of slow split, and there was an equally fine moment when John Jones was curled against the stage. Perhaps the solution to modern ballet depends upon a synthesis of classical techniques with the more natural body movements of expressionist dancing. In the past Balanchine has rejected expressionist dancing because of its symbolism, romanticism, formlessness, and pretentiousness. He has favoured classical techniques in the belief that they result in clear accurate dance patterns and a general purity of movement. However, on the basis of *Variants* it seems probable that ballet will need to refine a new purity of technique and body movement from some other style, such as expressionist dancing, if it is to fit the rhythms of contemporary music.

If Balanchine's *Variants* isn't the *Petrouchka* of our time it is still better than any ballet I have recently seen. It would be unfortunate if it did not become part of City Center's regular repertoire; and I certainly would not be surprised if it became an American cultural export to various European festivals. If only Balanchine, or some other City Center choreographer, would take up the problems raised by *Variants*, it might not be necessary to wonder who goes to the ballet.

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LONGMANS

The Sculpture of Donald Brook

The contemporary painter or sculptor faces a situation in which art has become, socially speaking, unimportant. As Professor Wind pointed out in the Reith Lectures this year, it is peripheral to the central energies of society. For true depth and significance art must be capable in principle of interacting with a large and genuinely concerned public – but its present role is largely an affair of the galleries. We are onlookers to a sophisticated game of pleasing the *cognoscenti* by a skilful deployment of fashionable idiosyncracies. Gallery proprietors and dealers, art critics, the Arts Council “establishment” and a handful of interested gallery-goers constitute the artist’s effective public. They are the people who make the demands, who react to what is offered, who stimulate and depress. They are the context in which modern art grows, and one in which it may well come to feel grossly mishapen.

If an artist perceives this clearly and chooses to make the best of it whatever the hardships involved, he does so recognising that the odds are against his work ever being widely acclaimed. And if it is seen, if its merits are recognised by a critic or critics, he is naive indeed if he then assumes that he has reached escape velocity. What is much more likely is that he will have to hump his unsold works back to the studio and try to go on as if the exhibition had been no more than a somewhat harrowing fantasy.

Donald Brook – a sculptor who is neither naive nor prone to fatuous assumptions – provides us with a case in point. His first one-man exhibition at the Woodstock Gallery nearly two years ago was very favourably reviewed in the then Manchester Guardian. He has since shown in two group exhibitions at the same gallery, and his work has increasing dignity and authority. Credit must go to the Woodstock – but what about the critics, with the exception of the Guardian reviewer? Their silence alone, in the case of Mr. Brook’s work, would be enough to justify the spirit of my first two paragraphs.

Brook is obsessed with two specific groups of problems: one formal, the other philosophical in the least technical sense of the word. Believing as he obviously does that the human figure had, has and probably always will have an important place in sculpture, he nevertheless does not give it a central place. More or less significant variations on the human form are not the subject of his work. It is the relationship between mankind and the objects of his contemporary environment that has become the subject. The human figure is restrained almost to a cypher. It is a gesture struck in a context derived largely from mechanical or technical images; and the formal problem is to unify, to melt the components into a single image.

The human form cannot be “mechanised” beyond a certain point without offering misleading implications of a “robot” kind. Nor can technological images be rendered organic in such a way as to merge with what is human, without discontinuity of style and treatment. The surfaces of flesh and the angles of steel have no natural affinity, and the unifying principle must be thought out, contrived, invented.

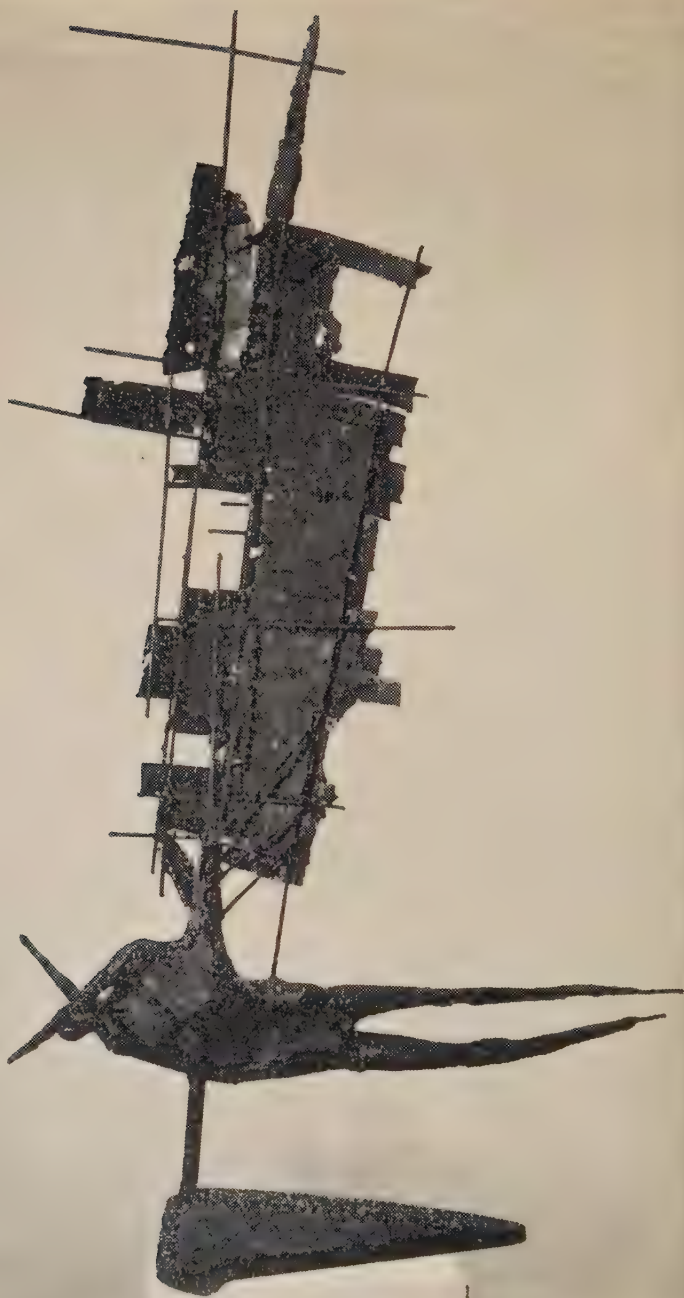
Given the problem, it is disastrously easy to offer a literal reading that renders the image ridiculous – as, for example, when a figure requires support and the necessary connections made between it and the rest of the sculpture are “read” as symbolism. The risk is one of provoking such comments as: “I suppose those rods sticking out of him are meant to imply a wounding by the brute forces of machinery?” And the difficulty is that this might very well, in another case, be part of the intention. It is a difficulty inherent in all sculpture which draws heavily on figurative elements but does not use them in a straightforward didactic way. Ideally, all manner of interpretations should be possible, dependent upon the imagination of the observer and independent of the artist’s intention. The artist may well fail to understand his own work, though it is unlikely that he will misunderstand it entirely. What he *must* do is avoid offering a peg on which to hang absurd or contradictory readings.

The dangers are only justified by the possible gains.

Brook believes that shapes and relations derive their significance for human beings from the overtones of association which surround them. A shape which resembles nothing in the world (a truly “abstract” shape) is sterile of associations. Whilst it may be visually agreeable it can hardly be significant in any interpretation of the world. The richer a shape is in human associations, the more potent – and dangerous – its use becomes for the artist. At the limit, when subjects of the natural world are literally reproduced or imitated by the artist we see that he has gone too far. Somehow he must stop short of that limit, but he must not, for fear of the dangers, stop so short of it as to offer only pictures in the fire.

In a series of figures in welded steel and ciment-fondu, plaster and wire, Brook shows us man and the apparatus of his modern civilisation inextricably fused. What comes to mind at once is that the technology seems vestigial. It is a remnant – and in some of the pieces, apparatus is almost demoted to the status of paraphernalia. Fragments of steel and spindles of shattered bone turn in space, or this one is still, that one is transfixed, another shows the literal extension of machinery from the thews and sinews of a human artificer. Anyone who imagines that the charge of being literary can be used to trivialise a work of art would be hard pressed to sound even plausible in front of these figures. Such a charge would reveal more about the accuser than the objects accused. Above all, they remind us that we can still require from art that it should enact – or re-enact – any aspect of human experience which has been perceived by the artist in such a way that it quickens our sense of whatever we are, are committed to, or exposed to. That we are born and grow, build and invent, make love and make war . . . that our existence has *consequences* ranging from creation to destruction – surely these things have a moving and honourable place in the images we make for ourselves and leave to others.

It is of this that Brook is most aware. His figures are in free fall. Their postures have been heroic. They convey the ambiguous potential of man as a species and as individual. Even so, we are neither simply being told a story nor offered an allegorical caution. If this sculptor looks for a relation between man and the world, he manages to assert in doing so that whilst we owe much to the past we can concede it nothing. He surely knows as much about the human body *as a mechanism* as any artist ever has. His eye probes and scrutinises, recording surface and structure – but



"Gesture in a mechanical context (I)"

Height : 7 feet

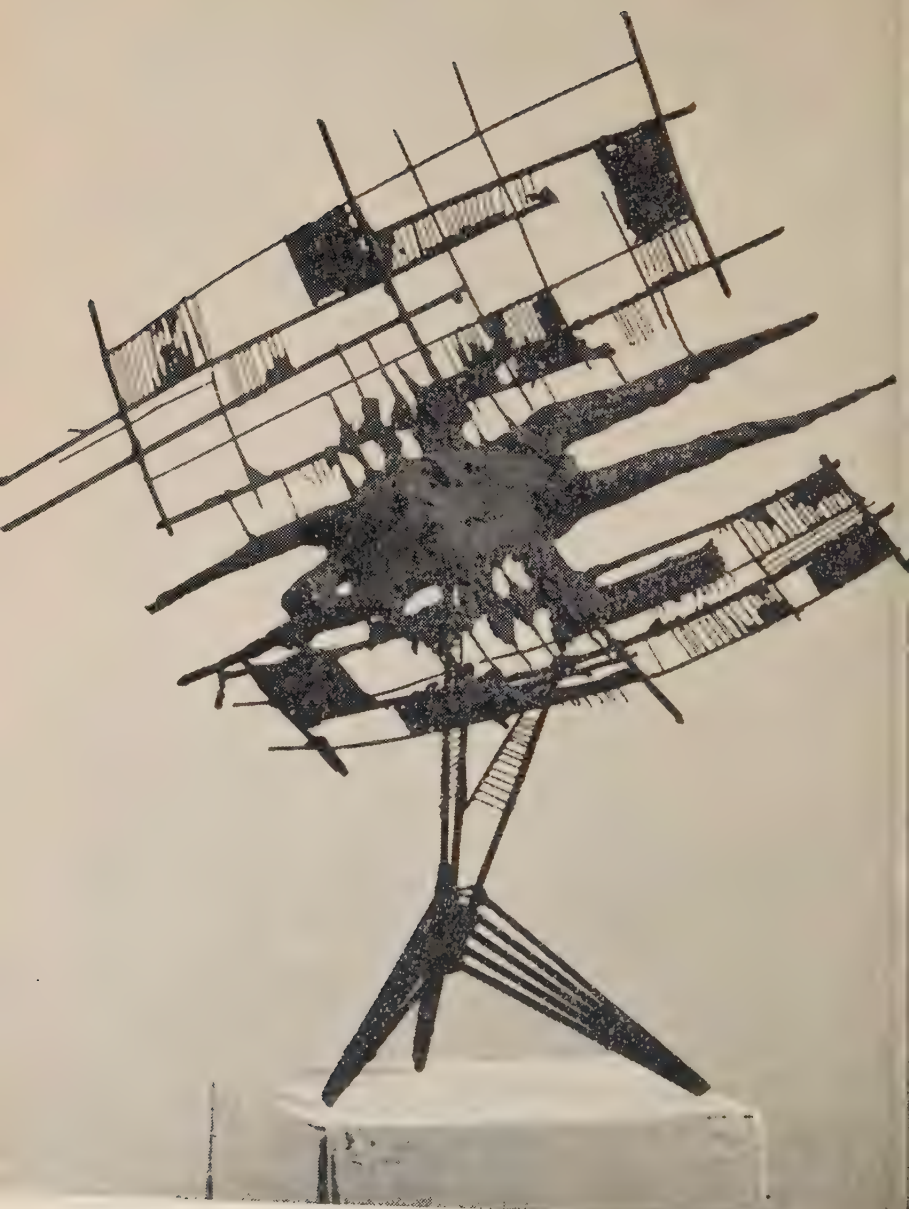
he suffers no loss of identity. And by this I mean that whatever is seen is entirely subordinated to his own purpose, i.e. to fathom the discontinuity of that same body and the environment from which it takes life.

Like many other modern sculptors it is inevitable that he should feel his way towards the implications of a species which has dominated its environment and created another in its place – the embryo, however crude as yet, of the machine city. The uses of the body are being rapidly delegated to machines. The body is, after all, weak, vulnerable and inefficient as a labouring machine. If we are neither romantic nor sentimental we must welcome an age in which men can construct their surroundings without squandering their physical energy in the process. What haunts and worries us is the manner in which we are to survive the superannuation of most of our biological equipment. Nineteenth and twentieth century nature cults, nostalgic revivals of obsolete crafts, communities of people doing indifferently what machines can do well – these bear witness to the absurd lengths we will go to in defiance of our technology. Some of us. And the some, however ridiculous they may seem to the rest, voice a universal disquiet.

One could argue that these notions lie (however tenuously) behind some of the sculpture which we recognise as being in the contemporary idiom of such widely differing artists as Butler, Richier, Armitage, Frink and others. The characteristic features of this idiom derive partly from the materials and forms which technology has introduced; but where the individual differences occur seems to depend on how far the artist is prepared to accept an internal solution to his problems (a private language which may or may not catch on), and how far he accepts some sort of obligation to communicate in a wider sense. Brook is obviously committed to the second course. Those who instinctively adopt the first move us in strange ways, they positively demand art-talk to attempt to describe what is going on. We say they “evoke”, they are “incantative”, they demonstrate “subtle and painful metamorphoses”. And so they possibly do. Yet their value to us, the sensations they give us, could one feels be blotted out by a single unequivocal statement from an artist who is passionately concerned with the world he lives in as much as he is motivated by awareness of his individual, isolated predicament. What Brook has chosen not to ignore is the shared predicament.

This sort of division is arbitrary, and many artists might deny that their work belongs to either category – or even claim that it belongs to both. Brook’s insight is to distinguish as a primary step what belongs only to himself and what belongs to the world – and to refuse to be content with inward exploration as a sculptural gesture of value *in itself*, however rewarding it might be as a preamble to the effort of communication. If we withhold from his sculptures what we know of art as magic, as myth, as mystery – their impact remains profound and forceful. They are ourselves. Such work is immune to the neglect or puny iconoclasm of a society which insists upon the absolute freedom of the artist as cynically as it ignores the responsibilities of freedom.

One would like to see it in public places. Brook says he would rather work for any local authority than the nabobs, but: “The only trouble is that no local authority has the slightest idea what kind of demands it ought to make on me. Nor do I have the least notion what to say to Councillor X when he asks me, inevitably, ‘... but what’s it supposed to represent?’ ”



"Gesture in a mechanical context (II)" Height : 3 feet

Perhaps there is no solution. Local authorities do not feel the need for art strongly enough to be clear about what they want and why they want it. So many public commissions are pious frauds, put up in deference to a quite abstract concept of "culture" and not because there is a deep desire for them by a large body of people. The whole process is most obviously fraudulent when the local councillors, sensing their own incompetence, appoint an artist chosen for them by qualified representatives from the hot-house. The consequence is a piece made for and in terms of the gallery world, stuck inaptnly outside the Town Hall. But what can be done about it? If the citizens, through their elected representatives, back their own judgement, the results could be appalling. If they back the judgement of, let us say, the Arts Council, they are simply perpetuating the present state of affairs. Of course, if feelings ran deeper than they do, there would be much more backing of local judgement than there is; and whilst some of it would be disastrous the ultimate consequence could hardly be other than beneficial. And if feelings ran deeper art would not be peripheral and the debate would not arise.

But is it true that there is no solution? That art is out on a limb? An unnecessary social phenomenon? And if so, why does this artist – any artist, work on? "To find the non-existent solution," says Brook:

"It is absurd. It is human. The social unimportance of art does not entirely trivialise what one is doing. Society doesn't give a damn whether or not the Etruscan language is deciphered, but we fully understand what an archaeologist means when he says that the discovery of a bilingual text would be 'of the first importance'. I should like to work for a lot of people, but if in practise I *can* only work for a few, then I have to trim my notions of grandeur. And after all, Giacommetti is a profounder artist than Walt Disney, whatever society has to say".

DONALD BROOK: Born Leeds 1927. Studied engineering at Leeds, and (after the army) sculpture at Kings College, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Travelled and worked in Greece and France after leaving Kings. Lecturer in Fine Art at the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology 1956-57. Has since lived as a practising sculptor in London.

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Brecht's Galileo

To give "chapter and verse" to the contention that Brecht refused to think, that he was "a liar . . . stupid and sentimental" is a challenging theme. Has Mr. Nigel Dennis (*Encounter*: No. 85; October 1960, Vol. XIV., No. 10) brought off the feat?

Mr. Dennis' first objection: *Galileo* is slow. Answer: it quickens on re-reading (probably also on seeing it performed more than once). Much, in the earlier part of the play, becomes more significant in the light of later events. Brecht himself was aware of the difficulties with which the vast canvas of the play would confront the spectator: "As far as details are concerned, this type of play must rely on the knowledge of the whole". (*Aufbau einer Rolle*. Laughton, p. 53).

Brecht's "refusal to think" is not as strong as Mr. Nigel Dennis' refusal to come to grips with Brecht's thought. First, however, what is the task of the scientist? *Galileo*: "I believe that the only aim of science is to ease the burdens of human existence". Now, many Western scientists do not share this Marxist view. Sir George Thomson criticised it recently. He believes that science also has the task to fathom nature, irrespective of any practical benefit to mankind. Brecht's *Galileo*, now over twenty years old, has a ready answer to Sir George, debatable but hardly stupid in the light of our experience: "When scientists, intimidated by selfish rulers, are content to accumulate knowledge for knowledge sake, science may become crippled, and your new machines may only bring new miseries. You may eventually discover everything that there is to be discovered, yet your progress will only entail a new progression away from mankind. The gulf between you and mankind could, one day, become so wide that your triumphal shouts about some new achievement would be answered by a universal cry of horror". Does this fear not live in all of us? A delegate from the Association of Scientific Workers to the T.U.C. Congress expressed the dilemma thus: 'So much attention was given to the achievements of satellites and rockets, and of bigger and better weapons, that some people might think that a little less science would bring a little less of these things. But people in industry know how the standard of living would be improved by the application of more science' (*The Guardian*, 9th September).

Mr. Nigel Dennis finds that Brecht is not sceptical enough. In fact, the theme 'scepticism', 'doubt' runs through his entire work. It is not incidental that one of his poems is called 'Lob des Zweifels' ('In Praise of Doubt'). His critical thinking led him to conclusions different from Mr. Dennis' and mine but that was not for want of trying. In his first great speech, *Galileo* delights in these sentiments: "For where belief was entrenched for a thousand years, doubt is now installed. Everybody says alright, that's what the books say, but let's find out for ourselves. The most famous verities get a pat on the back; things that have never been doubted before are now doubted". Later: science tends "to make sceptics of us all"; the "new art of doubt" gives a thrill to the people who

had been accustomed to accept their lot as unchangeable; even the Little Monk is infected by Galileo's critical make up: "There is happiness in doubt. I am asking myself, why". On one point Mr. Dennis is right: there is a passage which has an autobiographic ring about it. In scene 9 Galileo declares: "My intention is not to prove that I have been right until now, but to find out if". (To re-inforce the argument: here, Brecht "regularly interrupted rehearsals and pointed out that, to Marxists, this is the most important sentence in the play" (my italics): Käthe Rüllicke, *Leben des Galileo. Schlusszene*; in *Sinn und Form*, Second Special Brecht issue). Galileo continues: "Indeed, we will question everything, everything once again. And we will not go ahead with seven-league boots, but inch by inch. And what we find today, we will wipe off from our blackboard to-morrow and we will only write it down again when we find it confirmed once more. And when we have found what we wanted to find, we will look at it with special distrust. Thus, we will approach our observation of the sun with the firmest resolution to prove that the earth is *standing still*. And only when we have been defeated, completely and hopelessly defeated, licking our wounds, in the saddest possible frame of mind, will we begin to ask ourselves whether, perhaps, we have not been right after all and the earth does rotate!" – Would Mr. Dennis inform us of any other play which "champions" scepticism more?

Mr. Dennis' main criticism of the play is that it rests on a "lie" (the word occurs six times in a page or so), that its situations are "invalid". This itself rests on Mr. Dennis' wrong premisses. There is no need to feel a "natural embarrassment" in raising the question: 'What is the responsibility of the thinker?' Replace 'thinker' by 'scientist' and this is what the play is *mainly about*. (Brecht would probably have remarked that you cannot separate the 'thinker' from the 'maker'). In Mr. Dennis' opinion, the theme of the play is "clearly" stated in these words: "By recanting, Galileo postponed the dawn of the Age of Reason by one hundred years". I cannot recall any such remark by Brecht. It is true to say that Brecht believed Galileo's 'betrayal' delayed social progress. This 'betrayal' consisted in divorcing himself from the most progressive class of his time, the bourgeoisie. The result was evolution instead of revolution in social affairs and the orderly and limited withdrawal of 'reaction' (see the Notes on *Galileo, Zu Galileo*, in *Stücke*, vol. viii. p. 198; Brecht's ideas are laid out clearly in his plays; yet a reading of his, often, scattered Notes and remarks will contribute to our understanding and pleasure). Here Brecht, seemingly, puts his agreement with Marxist condemnation of the 'great man' – in history-theory into cold storage. Yet he makes Galileo say: "Under these very special circumstances the steadfastness of one man could have brought about great convulsions. . . . For a few years, I was as strong as Authority". These "very special circumstances" consisted in the political ferment of the industrial middle class which would have been glad to accept Galileo as an ally; indeed, it was actively trying to enlist his support (scene with Vanni, owner of an iron foundry, in which Galileo rejects Vanni's offer to support him in his fight against the Church, and the comment in *Aufbau einer Rolle. Laughton*, p. 50). There is a parallel here with our own time: both Galileo and the scientists of about 1938 stood "on the threshold of a pioneering situation" (*Zu Galileo*). Then, the question of whether the atom bomb should be developed or not had become sharply acute. If the

handful of atomic scientists had resolved to have nothing to do with the development of the bomb, or to resist the dropping of it by all means at their disposal once the military danger from Germany had passed, to stand up to Authority in the interest of humanity, history would have taken a different course (compare the pronouncement of a militarist: "Of course you understand, Sam, that if we have such a weapon we are going to use it": Robert Jungk, *Brighter Than a Thousand Suns*, Penguin). Brecht projects a similar problem back some three hundred years in order to make us think the more sharply of our own. If Galileo had persevered in his support of the rising industrial middle class and had not given in to Authority, science might – to Brecht's way of thinking – have undermined the Bible and the Church sooner than it did and history might have flowed Brecht's way. Were it but for a question of history, Brecht would never have written the play. He was concerned with history only by measure of the impact which it made on our own lives. As it turned out, the atomic scientists did what Galileo had done and what Brecht regards as the "original sin" of science: "I handed over my knowledge to the men in power, to use it, not to use it, to misuse it, quite as it served their purposes". The scientist is responsible to society as a whole, he is not there to satisfy his (natural and understandable) lust for research, he must resist Authority if it tries to use him for anti-social ends (cf. my letter 'Galileo in Fact and Fiction', *Times Educational Supplement*, 19th August). This situation is by no means "invalid" today. As long as it prevails, as long as the 'Hippocratic oath for scientists', envisaged by Brecht's Galileo, remains the isolated and unheard demand of a playwright, *Galileo* will remain an important and much discussed play, even for those who cannot appreciate the lucid, poetic beauty of its prose.

Brecht does not make his Galileo an "isolated Ptolemaic priest-astronomer". All the names, except one, which Mr. Dennis enumerates – Bacon, Descartes, Machiavelli, Montaigne, Copernicus – are brought into significant context with Galileo, either in the play itself or in work connected with it. We confine ourselves to two examples (both in the play): on hearing of Galileo's recantation Descartes immediately discontinued his treatise on the nature of light. (It vanished for ever). "Long pause": Galileo is shattered to learn that, in consequence of his betrayal, the world has possibly been deprived of a discovery of the first importance. The episode is the more poignant as we remember Galileo's exclamation earlier on: "I sometimes think, I would let them put me into a dungeon ten feet under the ground, if I could only find out what that is: light". It further illustrates that the actions of one individual can, under certain conditions, change (scientific) history. – As to Copernicus (and Giordano Bruno), the issue, far from being suppressed, is discussed in Scene 3. How could Brecht have hoped to "lie" successfully about a fact on which any sixth former might find him out? And why should he have deprived himself of the intellectual excitement which a comparison between the three men invites? ("Thinking is one of the greatest pleasures of the human race", says Galileo). Brecht enlarges on the theme 'Copernicus-Bruno-Galileo' in *Aufbau einer Rolle*. Laughton, p. 43f: 'the cases of Copernicus and Galileo are very different. Copernicus had his findings published posthumously. He did not fight for their acknowledgment. Galileo did, but in the process he betrayed his allies. Giordano Bruno's insistence on his theory that the earth was rotating around the sun,

put forward without proof, landed him on the stake. Yet, even if he had recanted, as Galileo later did, the consequences of such a recantation could not have been compared with those of Galileo's recantation; in Bruno's day, the struggle was still being waged on a much narrower front; it was still merely a question of scientific discovery. By the time of Galileo, however, the evolution of society had turned the battle for more applied science into a political one. The bourgeoisie keenly opposed the Church and the landed aristocracy. The hierarchy felt that even a partial victory of the new class had to be resisted in any field, lest it should lead to a widening of the struggle on the political front. Galileo at first engaged his science on the side of the middle class, but then dropped out of the struggle and submitted to the Church (i.e. Authority).' There, according to Brecht, lies his guilt.

Terms like "stupid and sentimental" are difficult to discuss, although I believe that Mr. Dennis' is a particularly subjective judgment. It is quite amusing to compare it with that of another critic who calls Brecht "probably the greatest man in the European theatre of this half-century . . . a thinker and a maker in equal degree . . . he loathed sentimentalism" (*Times Literary Supplement*, 24th April, 1959); to say nothing of the opinion expressed in the *Observer* where Mr. Sebastian Haffner seriously compared Brecht with Shakespeare. Mr. Dennis' "chapter and verse" treatment is not very impressive: no such "complaint" as he paraphrases is ever made by anyone in the play. — The sentence "For our new ideas we'll need people who work with their hands", taken in isolation, does sound like a "common catchword" but what follows in the text turns it into cogent reasoning. — The "platitude": "Are you staying with us here in Rome, Miss Galileo?" is (a) an inadequate translation, (b) seen in retrospect, the seemingly conversational approach by the Cardinal-Inquisitor clearly pointing to what is uppermost in his mind: the degree of Virginia's usefulness to the Church (i.e. Authority). It is a question of how to enlist 'intelligence officers', not of whiling the time away in idle gossip. The episode marks the beginning of Virginia informing on her father to the Inquisition. The line is, at that juncture of the play, as platitudinous as Hamlet's "I will watch tonight". That 'criticism' by Mr. Dennis shows particularly well what a bold man he is to call Brecht's a "strictly limited brain". — The management of the New York theatre which, in 1497, wanted to cut out the scene which Mr. Nigel Dennis finds so sentimental grasped what he does not grasp: that, what Brecht was getting at, was not a display of 'tough' dwarfs, cripples, beggars, but the threat ("invalid?") that those dwarfs, cripples, beggars, by keeping up the 'motion' which they had learned to appreciate from Galileo, could have their own cake and eat it.

Enough. It is high time that there should be an English edition of Brecht's work so that the public can judge for itself what a thoughtful, challenging, relevant, poetic, great play *Galileo* is.

H. E. RANK : born Vienna. Came to England 1939 and was naturalized a British subject. Read German literature at Cambridge. He taught German and subsequently became part-time tutor at the Extra-mural department of Liverpool University where he gave a course of six lectures on Brecht. *The Kenyon Review* and *The Universities and Left Review* have published his translations of Brecht's *The Life of Confucius*.

Two Poems

THE PIT OF PERCEPTION

Upended roots, the bare November trees
Seemed growing upside down into the earth.
Broken twigs were strewn to burn or freeze,
The scattered leavings of inverted birth.

Behind, but barely glimpsed, the only signs
Of life were people, neither young nor old,
Shapeless forms, inhabitants of mines,
Earth-coloured, crumbling, drowned in gold.

Some, he supposed, were women seeking shops
To gather varied fuels for the blood,
Subterranean tubers, mutton chops,
The winter's other forced or frozen food.

Then sprinkled petrol leaped as startled flames,
Behind the heat the half-built houses shook,
Sinuous jambs and glassless window-frames,
The forms dissolved and lost their human look.

Carved and polished trees and dinner ware
Of hardened clay. O Fiat Lux! There rise
The mountains, water falls, the land is there
And surfaced creatures see with human eyes

Dense undergrowth, ravines, denuded plains
Corrugated, pitted ground, twin peaks
Above the chosen site of crystal brains,
The hall of perfect forms and shapeless freaks;

Microbial traffic, full canals, lithe sperms
Evolving generations of the blind,
Militant corpuscles combating germs,
The glutton cells that gorge upon their kind;

Cannibal or social, war or peace,
To make one tenant die or two unite
That out of huddled bondage they release
A third from hibernation into light.

Next summer when the earth turned up again,
With riddled wood and worn foundation stones,
A world of vegetation stripped of men,
The branches of the flesh stretched out their bones.

THE FLAT DWELLER'S REVOLT

Dogs in mangers feel, he thought, like this;
He cast bread on the pavement for the birds.
Their claustrophobic voices, hers and his,
Their guarded actions louder than their words,

The booming morning wind brought back tenfold:
And ten times more their suffocated talk
Filled and left, like rats a sodden hold,
His keeling mind : he had to go and walk

To think of all he still had chance to save
And claim the open spaces of the park,
The earth that held his birthright and his grave,
And strictly meditate the fruitless dark.

He kicked the fuzzy stalks of London Pride,
Unfettered hairy seeds on tended plots :
That fallow night he hoped the wind had died
And, like unwanted children in cheap cots,

Between proud dahlias and hollyhocks,
On half-built sites the length and breadth of Leeds,
Neat crematorium, demolished blocks,
Like risen men, would stand the purple weeds;

And most profusely spread where common earth
Combined more spacious parents than his own.
Where such as he thought grimly on one birth
And ageing sons laid flowers on one stone.

His misspent seconds thus were packed in hours
Of dark like tenants of the crowded rooms
That bordered tight allotments of bright flowers.
The irresponsible growing of prize blooms.

That night he learnt himself by heart, his prayers
Unsaid for safety, summoned flesh and bone,
With ripe autumnal purpose climbed the stairs
And in the bathroom, washing, begged the moon.

The queen of female courses and of tides,
To shine on insured love in rented rooms
And break the dykes of all protected brides
And flood the little land of fertile wombs.

Two Poems

BUILDING HOUSES

The striking hammers sound
as if out of the sky,
as if above those trees
some carpenters now lie
and build insistently
a tall house there on high.

Here, where my hammock swings,
my drowsy sense invents
above the garden trees
towering arguments
in praise of man who builds.
I find no innocence

in summery indolence : —
my neighbor never sees,
when he looks up from work,
the black touch on the leaves ;
I lie content to take
whatever the sun gives.

I hear the hammers strike
to build another home,
in the wide world a corner
that keeps none safe from harm ;
and in the nested trees,
I hear the birds alarm.

A SONG

If Susan loose her hair,
who dares to see?
She draws its pins, and it
fall heavily,
a wave a goddess sent
from her golden sea.

Sometimes beneath the lamp
I see her bend
toward the waiting mirror
and lift her hand :
I turn from beauty for
I understand.

Yet in the night when we
are loving well,
I ride that scented wave
in its constant swell
and hear a warning laugh
like a buoy bell.

GENE BARO : born New York 1924. His work – verse, fiction and criticism – has appeared in a wide variety of periodicals. Taught the humanities and social sciences at the University of Florida, where he came to be curator of the Collection of Creative Writings. Reviews regularly for the *New York Herald-Tribune*. At present serves in the literature faculty at Bennington College and is also the American Editor for STAND. His first collection of verse was published in *Poets of Today*, vi., by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1959.

The Obeah Man

The Mabouya Valley lies at the foot of a range of mountains called the Barre de L'Isle. I thought, when I bought a farm in the valley and went to live there, that it was the most desolate place in the island. I still think so.

Not many people live there, and the few who do have their houses scattered at great distances from one another surrounded by big, tall trees which make the houses seem even more desolate, and lend to their desolation an eerie atmosphere.

There are no schools in the valley, no hospitals, and no churches. The people are a superstitious people.

At nights, especially on moonlight nights, when they gather round their fires in the yard after supper, or at a wake when someone has died, they like to talk in whispers of obeah and the voodhoo mysteries. And you might hear it said then that there are unearthly goings-on in the valley and that there are mysterious places in the woods where, when the full moon rises and the moonlight trickles down through the deep foliage, then there gather the fantastic figures of goats, unlike real goats, heads without bodies smoking clay pipes, and white dogs such as never walk by day.

The crackling wood fire, the dancing flames throwing weird shadows on the ground, all lend an added eeriness to the night, and when the people retire for the night they enter their houses backwards so that evil spirits may not follow them inside. Next they spread sand on the floor inside the doorway. For some reason evil spirits like to count the grains of sand and it will take them a long, long time to finish counting. By then the cocks will have begun to crow and the evil spirits will depart hurriedly not having had time to do any mischief.

And as if these things are not enough precaution against evil spirits the people lean brooms upside down against their doors and mark the doors with crosses.

Coming from the town, and having had the benefit of a college education, I often dismissed these stories as utter nonsense and always laughed at what I considered were the people's ignorance, until

One day I met and fell in love with a pretty young woman named Fenella. She was about twenty-two, broad-hipped and full-bosomed and from what I could gather from constant remarks of her male admirers many men desired her. Chief among them was a sly, quiet young man whose name was Stephane.

About a month after I had been seeing a great deal of Fenella things began to happen - strange, mysterious things

One morning I found two of my cows dead.

"But this is strange", I thought. "Only last night when I visited my stock everything seemed in order."

And try as I may I was unable to find out what was the matter. Until I visited Fenella that night and told her what had happened. It was then she related some mysterious goings-on about her own house.

I refused to harbour any suspicions.

"But it is all very disturbing, though", I told her. "You say you yourself have been unable to get a good night's sleep. How long has this

been going on?"

"Only last night. I locked my doors and windows carefully, like I always do every night before going to bed. Just when I was about to fall asleep a shower of pebbles came down on the roof. I was not frightened at first, but when it happened every time I was about to fall asleep I got really worried. And then," Fenella continued, putting her fingers to her nostrils, "then there was a very unpleasant smell in the room. As if there was some dead animal about somewhere."

I remembered then that Stephane and Fenella were very close friends at one time and that she had broken it off in favour of me soon after we met for the first time.

I said to Fenella: "Have you seen anything of Stephane lately?"

"Strange that you should mention him," she said. "It's over a month now since he stopped asking me to return to him. Every time we met he used to pester me so! Now we pass on the road and he just smiles but never says a word. I don't like the smile he smiles. And I don't trust him. He deals too much in obeah".

For a long time we sat talking in low voices. The oil lamp from Fenella's room threw a pale light from the doorway onto the ground, forming strange little patterns. Every now and then Fenella would look about her and at the oil lamp.

It was about eleven o'clock that night when I got up and, bidding her good night, set out for my home.

The moon was already making its descent in the sky. I walked slowly home, deep in thought. A warm breeze blowing over the valley rustled the leaves and branches of the trees.

On the right the densely wooded Olcon mountain, the tallest of the range, stood motionless, frightening, like a giant mysterious being, silhouetted against the bright star-studded sky.

On some nights there floats down from Olcon mountain the deep, untamed rhythm of voodhoo drums and children would rush into their homes and grown-ups would shut their doors quickly to keep out the frenzied sound.

Next morning Fenella came to see me and insisted that I go to see Isidore, an obeah man who lived at Olcon. I did not like the idea but not wanting to offend her I did as she told me. I talked about happenings in the valley with the old man, and about the sugar-cane crop. After a while I got down to the purpose of my visit.

Isidore took a strong pull at his half-broken clay pipe and leaned forward attentively while I told him of the mysteries of the previous day and night. When I was through Isidore smiled and said that he could take of such things. However, he said the case presented some difficulties – at this I smiled, but he didn't seem to have noticed it. But he insisted, these difficulties could easily be overcome. Of course, it would cost some money.

I paid the amount which he asked and a couple of hours later I left the house carrying a small vial containing some mixture which the old negro had prepared for me. When next I should visit Fenella and the same disturbances should keep her awake nights I would know what to do. He had already instructed me in that respect. He also gave me a vial of the same mixture, just in case. I threw this one away when I was some distance from his house.

That night I went to see Fenella taking the vial with me. We were sitting beneath a mango tree before her house talking when suddenly her hand shot up to her nostrils. The same odour of the night before was beginning to disturb her again.

I took the vial which Isidore had given me and poured the contents into the palm of my hand and then rubbed the soles of her feet with it, at the same time muttering some strange words which the old negro had told me to repeat when performing the task.

We were both completely mystified when, immediately I had finished the odour disappeared. Fenella confessed that she had suspected obeah all along.

All went well for a time after that until again one night I was returning home from a dance. It was past midnight. The night was dark, but fireflies set every hedge and bush aglow with their dancing lanterns. The frogs croaked noisily, the crickets chirped merrily, and I felt gay at heart.

I was certainly not drunk; nor was I imagining things. But no sooner had I opened the gate to enter my yard than a big, tall, white dog rushed past me from inside the yard and, at the same moment with one bounce threw the weight of its body against me as if to throw me down, and then vanished into the night.

I was thrown off balance for a fraction of a second but quickly regained my posture. I was trembling now with fright. The gate had been locked and I could not understand how the dog had managed to enter the yard. And, what was more, there were no such dogs in the valley.

I went on discovering more things. I had thrown the beam of my flashlight around in an effort to find a possible entrance for the dog when, on the very spot where I would have fallen had the dog succeeded in its endeavour, I saw several pieces of broken bottles stuck neatly in the ground, their sharp edges pointing upwards. Had I fallen – but I shudder at the fate that might have befallen me.

Cautiously I proceeded towards the house, my head bent to the ground looking for any more objects that might have been placed elsewhere. There were no more and I was about to breathe a sigh of relief when, looking up, I saw standing on the doorsteps a tall white man, dressed in white. A cold sweat broke over me. But, mustering up sufficient courage, I demanded of him what he wanted. There was no reply. I trained the light on to him, but no sooner had I done so than the figure disappeared into thin air!

I hurried inside. The same odour which Fenella had described to me now filled the room. My head began to reel. Frightened, I rushed out into the night, and at great peril to myself made straight for old Isidore's home at Oleon.

He was awakened by the loud pounding at his door.

"You've got to help me!" I said as he opened the door. "It's a matter of life and death. I'll pay anything you ask. You must help me." I sank breathlessly into a broken-down chair.

"What's the matter? What's happened now?" Isidore asked with some concern.

I told him.

"You must spend the night here, in that case. You're too frightened to return home. Now let me think this over for a while."

The old man remained silent for a long time with his head resting in the palm of his hand. At last he got up.

"To-morrow", he said, "You must buy a young goat. Seven hours after the moon rises you must come here with the goat. And one thing more – remember that when you come here you must enter the house backwards".

He said no more and I did not question him further.

I slept badly that night. I kept turning and twisting on the coconut fibre mattress. The whole thing seemed so fantastic! Yet the facts were there and I could no longer doubt them.

So as the old man had instructed me, seven hours after the moon had risen, which made it about three o'clock in the morning, I made my way to his house. When I arrived I found a pretty young girl in the room with Isidore. I did not know her, neither had I ever seen her before. As the time for the mysterious ritual approached Isidore, carrying the goat, went outside. He bade the girl and myself follow him. Isidore then erected a crude tabernacle under a large Fromagier tree.

Then standing before the tabernacle he began to chant a long, monotonous prayer which I could not understand. His hands moved ceaselessly as if weaving some spell. He then dipped a twig with some green leaves attached into a bowl containing a mixture of oil and herbs, all the while repeating his incomprehensible prayer. Then he ordered the girl to hold the twig up to the goat's mouth. The goat, as if it had no choice nibbled the leaves and then all of a sudden it thrust its neck forward. And thus it remained as if in a trance, its pale blue eyes staring into the night.

Holding a sharp, shining cutlass in his hand, Isidore gazed steadfastly at the eastern sky and, as if he had received some mysterious, invisible signal, he raised the cutlass

The night was as silent as a moment of expectation. Now and then weird sounds from the surrounding jungle accentuated the dramatic stillness.

Then with a rigid face, and in a voice which seemed gifted with super-human power, Isidore uttered some horrid imprecations and, with one movement of his hand brought the sharp cutlass down on the goat's neck.

Without a sound the animal leaped, shuddered, and fell senseless.

There was complete silence for about a minute, then Isidore said: "All is well now". And with a sigh of satisfaction added: "You won't have any more trouble."

I will not profess to have understood anything which took place that night, but I believe firmly in the powers of obeah men now.

When I returned home the broken pieces of bottles had completely disappeared and there was no trace of the foul odour. And from that day neither Fenella nor myself had any more disturbances.

Isidore has consistently refused to tell me who it was who wished me so much harm, but whenever I meet Stephane now he does not look me in the eye and no longer does he wear that malicious grin on his face; he hurries instead to the opposite side of the road, and he keeps his head bowed down as if in shame.

A Sailor Tells a Tale

They were discussing obeah and the voodoo mysteries when the St. Lucian came in. They were gathered round a table in a corner in a pub in the East End of London – a group of West Indian seamen, drinking and listening to a tall character called Tall Man. In a corner a jukebox blared out a calypso by Lord Kitchener.

"And as for St. Lucians", Tall Man said, pointing to the newcomer – "Boy, I'll tell you something. Don't trust them, you hear. Them is the worst of the lot. Born and bred obeahmen, I tell you."

A trinkle of laughter ran along his listeners. They waited anxiously to hear what amusing anecdote he was about to impart to qualify his statement.

The St. Lucian was at the bar now ordering his drink. Tall Man studied him for a moment, swallowed a mouthful of drink and then turned his attention once more to the group around him. The men waited impatiently, but Tall Man still remained silent.

The words of the calypso filled the room for a few minutes :

And when she called me I took the chance,
I went and lie down, but she want romance,
I said well, darling, I am misled,
I thought you called me to scratch me head,
She said, but Kitchie, boy, you playing you want to hide,
You know the reason why I tell you come inside,
I said, well, darling, yes, I think I know your aim . . .

Tall Man rested his glass on the table and smiled reminiscently. The men craned their necks forward eager not to miss a word.

Tall Man began. "I was once on one of them schooners that ply between B.G., Port-of-Spain, Barbados and St. Lucia, and what I'm going to tell you here happen true, true to God".

"The first time I land in St. Lucia I laid my eyes 'pon a brownskin, and I made up my mind then and there that I was going to get that craft if even it's the last thing I do before I die."

Tall Man allowed a few seconds to elapse before continuing his tale.

"So I laid my strategy, like the generals say".

Then he paused again and, spreading out his arms smiled with self-satisfaction. "Boy," he said, "women is women all over the world, no matter what colour. All you want to give them is some sweet talk, and all is yours."

Tall Man allowed this observation to sink in before he continued further.

"Well, that St. Lucian craft name was Berthilde, and I tell you honestly I never saw anything yet so pretty in all my travels. Seem like God took His own hand and form every part of that girl, if you know what I mean"

"Well, in no time me and she get friendly. And after a few trips we get to know each other good, good, and I start to take she out. I used to bring she presents every time I came back from a voyage and she like that."

"You move fast, partner. Ah feel you, Tall Man", someone interrupted. The others rebuked him gently and coaxed Tall Man to continue. "Well", Tall Man said. "One night after a dance, when we had been going steady for a long, long, I broached the subject, and I asked she if she could take me home. She tried to put me off with some stupid excuse or other, but I didn't pay her any mind. I know she wanted me but she was only playing hard to get".

"So I give her some old talk, and before she realized what was happening, I was there with her. Boy, I had some of that bad rum in me and I was feeling kind of robust that night. We start to hug up and so on. But I had the surprise of my life".

"All you know that St. Lucian people got plenty of French blood in them? Well, that night I found out that what they say about the people with French blood is really true. Partner, that craft Berthilde could shake her waist!"

A murmur of envy and admiration swept along the men.

"Well, after that performance things went good for a long, long, time. Then Mamselle Berthilde start to talk about marriage and them things. I didn't pay any attention to that kind of talk at first, but when I was tired hearing about marriage, marriage, I said to her one night: 'Look, girl, that word 'marriage' ain't in my dictionary at all, at all. What the meaning is I don't know, and I don't want to know'".

"Eh, eh!" Mamselle never said anything. She never made no fuss or nothing. She just let everything go on just as usual. So I said to myself: she must have change her mind about this marriage business".

"Eh, eh! One day I land from Barbados and I went to see Mamselle as usual. She was glad to see me back, but, I don't know, seemed she looked kinda quiet like. The night pass, and nothing happen".

"Next morning she asked me if I was coming ashore later in the day and I told her yes, if she wanted me particular like. So she said she would like to see me, you know, she wanted me to spend the day with her sort of thing, 'cause she wanted to cook me something special. I asked her what this 'something special' was and she said it's callalou".

"Well, I had heard about this callalou before, how it's nice and so, and I told her alright, I'll come. I told the cappen 'bout letting me have the day off and he told me it's okay. So I took my dog, Rex, with me and went to see Mamselle".

"That was a Saturday".

"Well, we spent the day hugging up and so on. But when the time come for Mamselle and me to eat Mamselle say she ain't hungry, and she laid mine on the table and she said she has to go out for a while but she going to be back in a few minutes".

"After she had gone out I didn't fancy eating without her, so I figure I going to wait till she come back before I eat".

"Now, here comes the best part of the joke. I looked at my dog, Rex, and see that he look kinda hungry. So I put some of the callalou in a calabash and I give the dog to eat".

"Gentlemen, believe it or not, but what I tell you happen is the Gospel truth. The dog swallow up all the food good and proper. Then he looked at me as if he wanted some more. But when I went to pour out some more for him he took a couple of steps backwards then turned round and made one leap for the door and was gone!"

"I couldn't figure out what had happened and so I dashed out after the dog. But partner, I couldn't catch up with him. Not until he reached the church".

The interruption was unanimous. The men looked at Tall Man and then at each other, refusing to believe what they had heard.

"The Church!" they cried out.

Tall Man leaned back in his chair and stared back at them, challenging them to disbelieve him.

"Gentlemen", he said. "That is the Gospel truth. The church".

"What for?" they asked, bewildered.

Tall Man stared at them in amazement. "All you don't know?" he asked. "All you don't know?" Then he leaned forward, his elbows resting on the table, his voice lowered to a mysterious whisper. "Well, I going to tell all you. All what I did to get the dog away from the altar he wouldn't move. I had to drag him out! And no sooner I got him outside than he rushed back inside to the altar".

Tall Man paused dramatically and studied his companions who remained stupefied with astonishment.

"I'll tell you something," he went on. "If I had eaten that callalou . . ." He broke off and chuckled.

W. PRICE TURNER

Encounter

I went to the cupboard for – what?
I forget. But there was this green
stem quivering a skinny claw
at me. That shook me, quite a lot.

Of all things, an onion. I mean,
one's dignity demands that raw
vegetables maintain, if not
respect, then at least a serene
aloofness from all human thought.

I grudged its growth in such gross stealth,
lifted it: a floppy sickle,
soft to my hand, the curled prongs
limp, and I envied the fierce health.

Pathos is often this fickle:
a mute striving, instead of songs,
it may sprout on the humblest shelf.
Preserve me from such a dire pickle . . .

Put it back in the dark yourself.



SHELL COUNTY GUIDES

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George Lamming: The Novel and Revolution

It is difficult today to be excited about the social novel – after years of socialist thinking and stylistic revolutions in fiction little has come off the presses that would indicate that writers today have really begun to create a new literature. To talk about Gorki and Orwell is hardly to the point: a world social revolution has rarely been considered in terms of the whole human predicament: there is either an excess of futuristic jargon, or a radical, but almost naive, break with the past. Pasternak's novel is one of the few that takes account of the sum of experience – but his contribution is but partially satisfying – one hardly feels the revolution as part of human demands. But at least he is aware of the past as a vital component of experience; he discusses ritual and tradition without getting hysterical.

But to get to the heart of the matter. The novel today is mainly a social-documentary tract or else psychological exercise. For it to mean more as a discipline as well as an education it must surely concern itself with the total social, political and cultural experience. The 'Lolita's' and the 'Lucky Jim's' are interesting social documents. But as novels of value they are of marginal importance. The major criticism is that they are subjective, and any wider significance they may have often seem incidental or derivative. What dangers lie in the 'philosophical' novel we all know: but the equally great danger of becoming neurotic over our personal predicaments or flippant over the social milieu are usually ignored. The novel that has a 'world view' as well as being written (as it must) out of personal experience is far more relevant to our current situation. It's time we recognised fiction as possessing more than a scandal or esoteric value.

I choose to write on George Lamming because I find his theory and practice of literature to be nearer than anything I know to that statement of world revolution that seems to me to be imperative if literature is to be redeemed from the archives of a dead culture. Orwell's literature of fear, Beckett's literature of defeat, Nabakov's literature of illness – tracts and documents, but little youth: the "country for old men". George Lamming, from the youth of the colonies, is providing what we are unable to give.

If I exaggerate, I must apologise. There is much in Lamming's work that I would like to have explained, there is frequently a looseness of expression, a hastiness of writing. But if this is accepted, and if it is also accepted that humour, narrative, imagery, rhythm and enthusiasm are vital to literature, then Lamming can be introduced with confidence.

In seven years George Lamming has produced four novels and one book of essays, besides numerous short stories and poems. What is important in this output is the consistency of theme and the subtle inter-relation of ideas, images and characterisation. His works are part of a whole output which traces the facts of the colonial position, and through this, the past and present experience of the coloniser. A society of flux includes many elements – Lamming demands that we consider all experience in our attempt to see ourselves in terms of human relations, and as free men.

The novels are best understood in light of the book of essays "Pleasures of Exile", published in 1960, and containing pieces on the West Indian in London, the Haitian revolution of 1791, an analysis of "The Tempest" in terms of Prospero (the imperialist) and Caliban (the colonised), a visit to Africa and America, and the position of the colonial writer in the world revolution. His biases and perceptions are treated in a vigorous manner and relate to the theme of his writing in general: in looking at his novels I shall, where necessary, amplify by referring to sections of this book.

The novels deal with the awakening of the West Indies to a sense of freedom and creative development, and use the dual themes of tradition and racial differences as the bases for the work. "In the Castle of my Skin" (1953) describes Lamming's childhood in a legendary mythical world yet simmering with impending change; "The Emigrants" (1956), placed in England, deals with the mass migration of West Indians; "Of Age and Innocence" (1959) relates the account of an abortive uprising in a West Indian island and the awakening of political activity; and in "Season of Adventure" (1960) independence has arrived, but freedom has not yet been realised either for individuals or society.

In "Pleasures of Exile" Lamming says that it is "the mutual separation from their original ground which makes both master and slave colonial". This theme is first treated in "Castle of my Skin" where the colony is shown in its imperialistic atrophy. The narrator, son of a mixed marriage, is brought up to be acutely conscious of his predicament and his lack of opportunity. The traditions of the island are based on a vague belief in the bible, while old rulers, feudalistic and paternal, lord it over the negroes who have placed their trust in myths and biblical hopes. Contact with Southern American negroes emphasises the common situation, and shows how little the West Indians are conscious of their negro-ness.

"In America I have seen as much as a man get kick down for asking a question, a simple question . . . They suffer in a way we don't know here. We can't understand it here and we never will. But their sufferin' teach them what we here won't ever know. The Race, our people".

In the West Indies the domination has been more subtle: "They put up a sign, 'Members Only', knowing full well you ain't got no chance of becoming a member". The English are great administrators.

"In the Castle of my Skin" emphasises the development of consciousness, a consciousness obtained by living through the conflict of personal relations, in the explosion of an economic (the land) question, and in contact with negroes in other countries.

The real discovery of identity has to be achieved by emigration. "The Emigrants" deals with Barbadians who seek Big England, their dream. Barbados has been known as "Little England", and the migrants think of themselves as co-partners; "Together they were mistresses of the sea, and whenever, wherever, the two met on the same side, war or peace, there was bound to be a victory". Thus the West Indians seek only to be understood and accepted. Because of the clever administration of the islands, there has been no suspicion that the English will be hostile: West Indians feel that they are part of England. But the shock of contact only produces frustration, animosity, bitterness. There is little point in "looking" for "the English". West Indians must discover their own identity, gain recognition as human beings, prove themselves as West Indians.

England has become a school : " If you ask what it is them want to prove the answer sound a stupid answer. Them want to prove that them is themself ".

The essay " A Way of Seeing " in " Pleasures of Exile " elaborates the theme. The relations with the English became more sharply defined after the Notting Hill riots - " A large number of the people who felt so bitterly about the incidents in Notting Hill feel no less bitterly about the presence of these black men in this over-crowded country ". The implications of this attitude are two-fold. Firstly, " In spite of our difference in fortunes, the West Indian who was murdered in Notting Hill is an eternal part of the writing of Caliban who has, at least, warned Prospero that his privilege of absolute ownership is over . . . Now it is Prospero's turn to submit to the remorseless logic of his own past ". In other words, the positions are reversed and the discovery of his identity has placed the negro in the conscious role of joint-master, if not of over-lord. Secondly, the imperialist, " colonised by his own ambition ", " is terrified ". He has to re-assess his attitude. This may mean that he will try to accept certain convenient or " exceptional " negroes in an attempt to perpetuate the status-quo through an elite system. But this " may be the worst form of colonisation : colonisation by affection ". (That this is an accurate analysis of white imperialistic technique in adjustment can be seen in the attempt of the Belgians to create a Katangan elite who will co-operate with the old rulers, and in De Gaulle's effort to retain his ex-colonies within a French frame-work.) Alternatively, the imperialist may attempt to crush movements that seek to produce a new forward-looking state (as the Americans have done consistently in Latin-America, and in Cuba in particular); or they may take the indignant line of casting the colony adrift in the hope that it will be shown to be barbarous and in need of imperialist control - the French and Guinea.

The traditional technique is to try to crush all revolutionary movements and keep the colony in subjection. This forms the background to " Of Age and Innocence ", set in the fictional island of San Cristobal - though in every way as real as the Barbados of " In the Castle of my Skin ". In the first novel the island was lost in the miasma of colonial rule : but here the struggle for freedom becomes definite. Though the old people continue to live in the land of myth and political unconsciousness, two exiles returning from England are stirred to lead the islanders. Mark, a negro writer, has lived in Europe as the isolated artist, and, in spite of his love for an English woman, returns home to find his real sense of identity. Shepherd, the drunken prophet who thunders out Francis Thompson's " Hound of Heaven " as he flies into San Cristobal, is also forced back because of his frustration - both with England and with love. He becomes the hero of the island and with his arrival " everyone talked about the future as though they had discovered by accident a new dimension in time ". The people are awakened to the political realities of their situation and suddenly the island explodes into violent demonstrations. These are violent because the colonialists have reacted in the usual manner - with bayonets and tanks. At the end there is a lull. The islanders have been pinned down, the various leading characters are dead, the movement seems to have been crushed. But the younger generation knew that it would win -

" ' Tomorrow is the trial ', said Bob.

'Tomorrow an' maybe 'til a next tomorrow it last', Singh said. 'But hardly more', said Bob, 'tomorrow an' a next tomorrow' ". "Season of Adventure" opens with the knowledge that San Cristobal is now an independent republic. But the implications of this independence are deeper than the mere relief from foreign administration: the novel is a study in the meaning and practice of freedom. Powell, perhaps the most intriguing character in the book, says that "Independence ain't nothing 'till it free . . . Free is free, an' it don't have given an' it don't have taken". He attacks the ruling clique because theirs is a selfish conception of freedom, they are like "the tourist army that give them freedom to bully you and me. They harsh and cruel 'cause they think that freedom is a gift they can't afford to lose. Is bad that thinking, is the nearest any man come to killing what he is".

The main characters, Fola, an illegitimate daughter whose mother marries into the ruling police force, and Chiki, an artist whose creativity is thwarted by his inability to "break through" into the present, are brought together as Fola, after experiencing the Ceremony of Souls, is taken beyond this moment by the nameless futures which were knocking on her head", and searches San Cristobal for her father, the "need to resurrect her own life", and discover her identity. As part of the search, Chiki is awakened to his present and, following the murder of the Vice President, leads the revolt of the steel drummers who abolish the pseudo-democracy, instal a new President and "wait, pause and wait as though for death or for some noise unknown". The subdued expectancy at the end of the novel is a note both of hope and apprehension. There may be trouble, but the drummers believe that the worst is past.

The novels are political, and poetical. They are not documentaries nor exercises in self-analysis. They are partisan in their acceptance of freedom as the clue to human personality and they show how the social forces prevent this being developed. "Free is how you is from the start, an' when it look different you got to move, just move, an' when you moving say that is a natural freedom make you move. You can't move to freedom 'cause freedom is what you is, an' where you start, an' where you always got to stand". This is a crucial attitude in Lamming's work. He aims to project the individual into a conscious expression and realisation of his freedom and show the elements impeding his break-through. To do this one could hardly write a documentary or purely "social novel". Lamming is a poet: one is struck by the way he has seen that such a politico-social theme can be treated in fiction without losing the advantage of poetic discipline.

But the real source of Lamming's writing is not Marxist philosophy nor the European verse traditions. Though his literary education has included the surrealists, the English nineteenth and twentieth century poets. Shakespeare, and the host of artists to whom we are all heirs, Lamming's imagery derives from a different culture. Fortunately he is not the first negro novelist, artist or political thinker. The imagery, the poetry and the mythology that recurs in the novels stretches back into pre-European Africa. it assimilates the ritual and tradition of Ghana as well as Haiti or Harlem, and it feeds on the experience of Aimé Césaire, Leopold Senghor, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, W. B. du Bois and M. Garvey in their wrestling with language and social situation. In short, Lamming's novels are an expression of the political, religious and cultural history of negroes and because of his dual sense of exile, of Europeans. The quote from

Francis Thompson's long poem is a call from a spluttering European tradition, and is made by a West Indian flying to a home country that is still drugged by the institutionalised effects of that tradition.

It is thus that the imagery of his work gains its consistency and its power, and affects his use of language. "Season of Adventure", which is a more satisfactory and commanding novel than the earlier ones, provides the best example of this. The "rhythm" of the novel is provided by the steel drums which are the manifestations of popular devotion, the centre of the ceremony of souls, and "every man's backward glance". These provide the basis for the island's cultural activity and act as a social escape valve. Lamming stresses the importance of the ceremony and of the drums; but though the drums are important because of their value as a cultural residue where, in spite of foreign domination, the people have preserved their identity in the only remaining expression of freedom, they are now inadequate for the development of an independent and free republic. The ruling elite are themselves uninterested in the drummers except as popular entertainers, and would accept the continuance of the ceremony as an outlet for what might otherwise become political action. Yet "The drums must guard the day", says Lamming: the drummers are the common people, the artists of the community.

When the ruling clique is replaced by Baako's autocracy, hope lies in the knowledge that the drummers are behind the revolution. But the future of the republic depends on the communication between Government and people. They have to find a language which is "no less immediate than the language of the drums . . . for it is the language which every nation needs if its promises and its myths are to become a fact". Otherwise republics will continue to fall.

At the end of the novel, the rhythm is changed. "The drums have not ceased to play; but their call is not the same . . . Sometimes they seem to pause halfway; pause and stammer like a child or a woman who cannot restrain her tears". And Great Gort, the old drummer has lost his drum, and "can't say what will happen", but "believes the worst is passed". He says that "the rhythms are not sure, but their hands must be attentive, and so recent is the season of adventure, so fresh from the miracle of their triumph, the drums are guarding the day".

The use of the drums, drummers and ritual is extremely effective in developing Lamming's theory of cultural function. The men and the society are creators: their importance and the freedom of the artist depend on the removing of the barriers to freedom (not in the granting of freedom: freedom is always present). The removing of the barriers can only come by the awakened consciousness of the people and creation of a society based on communication between all elements of the society. The old outlets for creativity may not be important any longer: thus there will necessarily be an awkward transitional stage, but in case the people are again restricted from expressing their freedom in politics, they must retain the old cultural apparatus. "The drums must guard the day". Thus at the end of "Season of Adventure" both Chiki (whose action led him away from painting into politics) and the drummers (who moved against the old, rotten government) are uncertain. Chiki sits, "the paradox of what he is and what he cannot do": the drummers are silent, the ceremony is dead.

1 If the "general" imagery of the novels is merely the most obvious, Lamming also uses imagery and analogy both as part of the narration and of the characterisation, as well as in the language itself. "Of Age and Innocence" is introduced by a piece of description at once immediate, in creating place and atmosphere and in its use as an image of transition :

"Suddenly the land was no longer there, and the airliner had lifted itself like a cripple grown used to his crutches. The sky was coming closer as the light turned to cloud which travelled always like a tramp. And the weather was absent".

2 Unfortunately this essay can be nothing but an introduction to Lamming's ideas : one must leave the reader to do his work on the use of language and description, on characterisation, and on the development of plot. Only the briefest clues can be given. The material used derives from a poetic image world, the social conditions of the Caribbean, and the personal experience of "living in the present" – being part of a continuous flow of forces. Thus the language relates to the characters who are part of a universal process, yet who must at the same time be as real as the most personal facts of life. Of freedom Lamming makes a character say –

"I felt this freedom. It was a private and personal acquisition and I used it as a man uses what is private and personal, like his penis". (The Emigrants).

Of equality –

"Her pee and my pee behave the same as your pee".

And of human essence –

"If he must spend every day of all his years collecting food and gathering wood for fire, he's not a man . . . Food is a dog's excuse". (Season of Adventure).

The language is frequently ritualistic – related to Lamming's belief in the importance of ritual as the repository of popular culture. In "Castle of my Skin" this is biblical, in "Season of Adventure" it is usually tuned to the sound and rhythm of drums. But throughout there is a sacredness in the 'feel' of the language, – the sacredness of a devotion to the individual, freedom, and the whole community. As with D. H. Lawrence, words are purified by their use in a personal, reverential sense. Even politics are personal –

"The anger of Charlot's generation had no precise details : it was not about poverty or hunger or waste . . . They were angry and bitter, made impotent with private grief . . . They had to reject the life which the senile wisdom of England's corpse had inherited for them". (Season of Adventure).

Because of this use of language, and the whole imagistic basis of his fiction, Lamming's characters are both realistic and representational. Gort, the old drummer in "Season of Adventure", though vivid as the ancient band player, is at the same time a figure of the old ritual :

"Their heads looked like a congregation in prayer as they tried to see Gort that day. His eyes were like chapels of endless Sundays burning with prayers, and his tongue was the first and only gospel of what had happened".

And whimsically, in describing the exodus of islanders, old Gort becomes a parody of God –

"All, all are going . . . only Gort remained because he could not read".

Individual characters never dominate : though there are heroes they are not preponderant – some of the most vivid figures are "minor" – though with Lamming none, but those who are trying to kill the souls and freedom, are really minor. Together they are playing a part in that process which he describes in "Pleasures of Exile" as changing "the meaning and perspective of this ancient tyranny".

Among a very small band of writers, of whom Robert Graves is an interesting example, Lamming has returned to the sources of poetic and social experience in an attempt to regain the directing force of literature. As an Afro-American thinker, he is dealing with the reality of political and cultural change. As a writer in England he is challenging the social basis of our literary tradition and demanding a response in our political consciousness. And, as with Nicholas Gullen, the Cuban poet in his poem "The Name", he cries, his voice reaching from Haarlem to Cape Town –

"Oh yes my pure friends,
yes, come and see my name!
My interminable names;
my name : mine, and theirs
my free name, and yours, and theirs,
theirs, my name free like the air".

IOAN DAVIES was born in Stanleyville, Congo, 23 years ago, educated there and in Scotland and Wales, and is at present reading Sociology in London. He is chairman of the London New Left Review Club, writes short stories, literary criticism and 'a sort of poetry', and thinks about a novel he's been trying to write for two years. He is a frequent contributor to 'Tribune' and 'Time and Tide', and lectures for the Movement for Colonial Freedom of Congo.

* * * *

JACQUES COMPTON was born in St. Lucia and came to Britain in 1953. He is 33, works as a free-lance journalist and broadcasts on the Caribbean service of the B.B.C. In addition he is the editor of the "West Indian Students' Newsletter" and will be editor of the "Caribbean Students' Quarterly", a new periodical which will make its appearance in October.

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E. E. Cummings : Selected Poems 1923-1958

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I remember a conversation with two poets several years ago in which we discussed the possibility that great poets may be living in our time. I don't recollect that either of them had any candidate for greatness then, but they scoffed at mine : Edward Estlin Cummings. It was obvious that neither of them had the remotest idea of the body of work behind that name. Long after this conversation, one of these same poets had an article in "20th Century" purporting to examine the claims to greatness of our "Top Ten" contemporary poets. In this, he mentions Cummings long enough to dismiss him, and names another as the greatest poet of our time. Unfortunately for his arguments, prominent among the lines he quotes as proof of Hugh McDiarmid's greatness are the following :

Be like Spring, like a hand in a window
Moving New and Old things carefully to and fro,
Moving a fraction of flower here,
Placing an inch of air there,
And without breaking anything.

He goes on to admit that "One could read 400 pages (of McDiarmid) without coming across anything so immediately attractive as the above quotation". This is scarcely surprising, when one considers that

spring is like a perhaps
Hand in a window
(carefully to
and fro moving New and
Old things, while
people stare carefully
moving a perhaps
fraction of flower here placing
an inch of air there) and
without breaking anything.

is how these lines (from No. 7 in the Selected Poems) first appeared when written by E. E. Cummings. The most cursory window-shopper cannot fail to notice how consistently Cummings effects the delicate spontaneity which some poets only realise by smash-and-grab. One could not read even 20 consecutive pages of Cummings without encountering several pieces equally attractive and just as typical of the individual quality of his thought.

Cummings has always disturbed critics who like their poets easily classified. How can you classify a poet who insists on being nobody but himself, who is capable of the most delicate lyric in honour of Spring, yet has the courage to denounce his country's foreign policy with deadly contempt? The mind aware of its own uniqueness is never one to move with the intellectual fashions of the day. Cummings made his commitments right at the start of his career, and has never wavered in his devotion to them, whatever way the weathercock swivelled. If his stylistic devices,

the fragmentation of language and cheeky games with punctuation, have drawn most of the critical fire, his "stubborn" praise of Spring and adherence to celebration of the positive constructive, the *Is*, have been the larger target for critical riff-raff. Cummings, we are told, is Sentimental and Limited in his range. The depth of fatuity to which some reviewers have sunk in attempting to make such charges stick must be quoted to be marvelled at. For instance, in a leading article in "The Times Literary Supplement" of March 25th, 1960, the reviewer, dealing with the famous sardonic poem (No. 4) about Buffalo Bill says: "... we are somewhat shocked to discover that Buffalo Bill had blue eyes, and as for his being a boy - we just do not believe that ... the author would appear to have perpetrated a confidence trick of the kind usually called sentimentality". And so on. When one considers that the offending phrase is:

how do you like your blueeyed boy

Mister Death

it is obvious that only a wilful refusal to consider the colloquial meaning of "blue-eyed boy" could have led the reviewer to make such a blunder. But mud of a dirtier nature has been thrown. The label, "Anti-Semite", has been another obscurantist device often used against Cummings. Anyone of the where-there's-smoke mentality is advised to read the poem celebrating the Jewish tailor (No. 48) to dispel this one. Cummings is actually one of the few poets to have written also a poem *attacking* Anti-Semitism!

I have spent space on refutation of some unjust condemnations of Cummings because these have passed into the archives without a line of protest following them into print. If suspension of prejudice were not essentially a matter of self education, a more detailed examination of such could be of general interest.

The present selection of 100 poems has been made by the poet himself from eleven published collections embracing a span of thirty-five creative years. These were years packed with fearlessly articulate protest against the mass conditioning of man in every form from advertising to political coercion. Cummings remains the champion of the individual and the scourge of the conformist mob, but

in time's a noble mercy of proportion

and his audience has grown steadily both in size and appreciation of his achievement. Yet the blurb says that he is known in England mainly through his appearances in sundry anthologies. Reaching for the nearest, the Oxford American Verse, I find that of the 25 poems included there, some 15 are in this present selection. Any Cummings addict will regret the omission of at least half a dozen other favourites not included in either, and the temptation with any book by Cummings is to quote and go on quoting. It is a chain process: one wants *all* the poems. But this is an ideal selection for those just beginning to know Cummings. Very few of the typographically "difficult" items are included, other than the delightful:

here's a little mouse) and
what does he think about, i
wonder as over this
floor (quietly with

bright eyes) drifts (nobody

band this is probably the most self-explanatory of those depending to some extent on the visual arrangement of the poem on the page. The erratic progress of the mouse is conveyed partly in the intrinsic rhythm of the language, modified by unpredictable punctuation, and partly in sudden shifts of narrative attention. Both eye and ear are engaged, and intriguing hints of the minute intruder via typographical shorthand as in

gr(oo)ving

culminate in the actual disappearance of the mouse upon the printed page, when in the final line

who (look). , startled

three ordinary pieces of punctuation in succession afford a final phantom glimpse. Novelty? Stunt? Superficial? Well now, if making the typography work for its keep were the main attribute of Cummings, he might scarcely merit any sustained interest. But, in passing, let me suggest that any form of joy is worth attention, and that the reader who refuses to accept it for what it is worth only indicates a preference for his own brand of superficiality. I freely concede, however, that Cummings is frequently guilty of grand semantic tyranny, by sending an adverb on a noun's mission, making a noun serve as a verb, and so on. Having effected a kind of socialism of grammar by creating all parts of speech equal, he proceeds to capitalise on their forced labour, albeit in lower case :

when man determined to destroy

himself he picked the was

of shall and finding only why

smashed it into because

The most striking thing about all these poems is the skill with which a basically simple vocabulary is manipulated to power a complex imagination with maximum immediacy of effect. The irrational factor has been liberated from its chains, but never abuses that freedom.

what if a dawn of a doom of a dream

bites this universe in two,

peels forever out of his grave

and sprinkles nowhere with me and you?

Here the rhetorical abstracts of dawn, doom, and dream are held in check by the rollicking rhythm so that the multiple concept of dawn times doom times dream is carried in a still generative aura of horror to its full impact in conjunction with the stark statement of "bites this universe in two", while the abrupt juxtaposition of the personal verb "peels" and the impersonal "forever" lends a sardonic validity to the vision of chaos, which is at the same time underlined by the relentless drive of the rhythm. The curious fact is that however eccentric Cummings' style appears on first irritable inspection, it works wonders that no more rational process could have achieved with twice the words. Furthermore, in the process of creation, the poet's enthusiasms have impregnated the poems to that pitch where one can share his enjoyment of these resources to an unparalleled degree.

Rare enough is the phenomenon who writes with all his senses, but there is simply no other poet who can be tender, ironic, rhapsodic, bitter, lyrical or downright bawdy, and yet remain constantly identifiable as himself throughout this range. His attention never strays far from the basic imperatives of human existence, but he has no time for philosophical wool-gathering. The built-in paradox :

deeds cannot dream what dreams can do
is presented so rhythmically that the underlying force of thought is not
felt if you are that kind of reader. His fundamental reverence for life,
his hatred of hypocrisy, propaganda, stupidity, are always expressed with
unmistakable individuality of utterance, and a technique that penetrates
areas most other poets haven't begun to discover yet.

Elsewhere he says : " Knowledge is a polite word for dead but not buried
imagination ". For Cummings, the intellect is only a paddling pool beside
the sea of the heart. Sometimes the tide comes in with enough exuberance
to wash within reach a number of ageless sparkling wonders. Here are
a hundred to be going on with.

W. PRICE TURNER. Born 1927, in York. Edited " The Poet "
(Glasgow) 1951-57. First pamphlet of poems " First Offence " followed
by collection, " The Rudiment Of An Eye ". Has a new collection ready
for a deserving publisher. Currently Gregory Fellow in poetry at Leeds
University.

RAYMOND WILLIAM ZUK

GIVING (sept, '58)

I remember the night when your hot tears
 fell on my eyelids;
Your enigmatic sadness,
your painful thanks,
 brought the chill of sorrow to my giving;

I do not have the right to ask you, now,
 the meaning of your lean years;
I thank you now for that which you have let me receive:
But, I also curse you
 for that half-memory,
I grieve
 for the part of me
 that your giving has taken away.

Thoughts at Night

Here in my house at Richmond I
Wonder tonight how I shall die,
When the fat heart will cease to kick
And I be violently sick
For the last time. When the stomach's burst
I shall know to expect the worst.

A morbid set of fancies? Well,
Only time no doubt will tell
Which small ailment's teeth will tear
The wracked flesh beyond all repair
And suck the sour soul into space
With no protecting papered face.

I listen to the late night news,
The coasting buses – I wonder whose
Thin, shivering house is tumbling down
Tonight in my suburban town,
Whose inflated heart's grim footfalls
Shake the fragile body's walls?

In this low room, half-underground,
I count each hollow and each mound
Worn on a floor that once was flat.
I have a hollow in my chest like that,
A hole between the ribs you could
Press your fist in if you would.

I could imagine skin and bone
Develop ills of wood and stone
(The joints that creak, the walls that crack
Be in my kidneys or my back)
Quite easily; the cool disease
Like rising damp seep to my knees.

My thighs, my waist, my arms, my neck,
And then the heart halting, the wreck.
Patient with dry-rot, wet-rot, damp,
I stare up dully at the lamp
That peels the shadow from my head
And feel already I'm half-dead.

Suicide

By TRYFAN how he shuddered
 A child of twelve to see
 The ghost of Ben the butcher
 Swing on the chestnut tree.

Now by a chance returning
 With eighty years of frown
 He shudders still on finding
 No-one has cut him down.

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